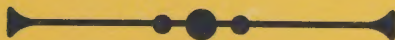


George Payne Rainsford James



THE STEP-MOTHER

A Tale




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THE STEP-MOTHER.

A TALE.

BY

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THE STEP-MOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

In a certain county of England, which cannot exactly be called a midland county, because at one point it comes within a few miles of the sea, there is a village, with a somewhat detailed description of which I must trouble the reader; and, moreover, I must beg him, as he proceeds, to mark all the particulars, and to remember them throughout, for in this village and its immediate neighborhood took place the principal incidents of the story about to be told. The scene is narrow, certainly, but very important things are often enacted in a very confined space; and, though amongst the personages to be introduced appear neither kings nor statesmen, yet there are as strong passions moved, and as deep interest affected in private life, as in the movements of parties or governments.

The village, then, is situated upon the slope of a hill, and extending from the top to the bottom. A few houses, indeed, are scattered along the valley, by the side of a river swarming with fine trout; and there, too, in a pleasant and sheltered situation, stands the church, with the clergyman's house, a low-roofed but neat and comfortable residence, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the gate of the churchyard.

Half way up the hill is a white house, with a brass knocker on a mahogany door, and the traveler as he passes by, if he be not shut up in a close carriage, may see, through the left-hand window, ranges of bottles and gallipots upon numerous shelves, and a lad, with an apron before him, pounding in a mortar, or pouring liquids from one bottle into another. Written in letters so large that those who run may read, is inscribed upon a brass plate, "Mr. Nethersole, surgeon, &c.," and very often, before the door, is seen standing a neat one-horse chaise, with a very respectable, plump, and well-conditioned horse figuring in the harness.

At the top of the hill, and at a short distance from the actual village, is a large red-brick dwelling-house, raised upon a bank formed by the cutting of the high road, along the side of which runs the wall of the extensive and well-stocked garden. The mansion has every appearance of comfort and opulence, the windows are numerous and large, the spaces between wide, the chimneys many—indicating at least twenty rooms possessing the advantage of a fire-place—and the state of repair in which the whole is kept is exact and perfect. A high brick wall, with broken glass bottles upon the top—very unpleasant for the hands of urchins possessed with the spirit of appropriating other people's apples—encircles the premises, containing, perhaps, a couple of acres; and in this

wall are three different entrances to the grounds: one a small door, reached by a flight of steps up the bank; another at the north side, presenting two large gates and a gravelled road; and the third on the side directly opposite to the small door above the bank, and communicating with a path, through some pleasant fields and lanes at the back of the village, which leads down to the church and the rectory. I may add, to render the picture complete, that the garden wall and entrance on the north side is sheltered by a fine grove of tall trees from the bleak air of a wide common beyond.

On the other side of the valley and the river, is another hill, higher, though less abrupt, than that on which the village stands. The thick trees of a park, which lies on that side, hide the face of the ground from the lower part of the village; but the windows of the mansion which we have described, looking over these giants of the forest, give a view of the interior of the park and of a fine old gray building, known in that part of the country as "The Hall."

At the time at which the events I am about to relate took place, the hall was not in the very best state of repair, though by no means dilapidated. The old stones were rather green and mossy, a part of the copings might be seen here and there suffering from the ravages of time; the doors and windows had not been painted for more than thirty years; and the latter, though perfectly sound, were seldom cleaned. It was a large, rambling, irregular edifice, with a vast gothic porch in the old style; many curious, ancient halls within; and having, without beauty, a grand and imposing air, from the gravity of its coloring and from its extent. The park, however, and all that it contained—its long winding walks, the lawn before the house, the broad gravel terrace at the back, the gamekeeper's cottage, the kitchen garden, the very wilderness—regular in its irregularity—were kept with the utmost neatness and propriety. The secret of this difference between the appearance of the house and the grounds, was simply this: the proprietor was a nobleman of somewhat singular character, immersed in the politics of the day, passing the greater part of his time in London, and rarely spending more than six weeks in the course of each year at his house in the country. He was reputed to be avaricious, and was certainly haughty. That he was stern and reserved he made sufficiently apparent during his short residences in that neighborhood, never associating with any of the gentlemen around, seldom exchanging a word with any one, and when forced to do so upon business, making his communications as laconic as might be. He was, also, it must be remarked, without wife or child, and never brought any party down with him from London to the

the purse of the worthy gentleman were always equally open.

The lawyer afforded still less sources of amusement or interest; he was a shrewd, clever, calculating, very silent man; each word that he uttered, and they were very few, was well weighed and pondered, although he had the reputation of occasionally helping his neighbors into disputes, from which it required his own assistance to deliver them; but, nevertheless, whatever he did in this way was well considered, and he seemed on all occasions to ask himself before a sentence was suffered to pass his lips, whether it was actionable. With him Mr. Charlton was often obliged to act in matters of business, but their intercourse went no farther, though the lawyer was always profoundly civil to his wealthy neighbor.

Though there were several other persons, in various ranks of life, living at the distance of a few miles, some of whom I may have occasion to introduce to the reader at an after period, these three formed the only society that the village of Mallington afforded, and the very retired and quiet situation which had been its great attraction in the eyes of Mr. Charlton at first, now proved a source of discomfort to him.

It is not improbable, indeed, that, under these circumstances, he might, sooner or later, have returned to London, and, indeed, he was beginning to argue himself into a belief that the masters which he procured for his daughter from a large town, about seven miles distant, were not so good as could be desired, when an event occurred which changed the whole course of his ideas, and fixed him on the spot where he was. But I must not introduce an important character at the end of the chapter; and the one who is now about to appear, well deserves a clear stage and no favor.

CHAPTER II.

In walking up the village of Mallington, from the rectory towards the mansion which was called Mallington House, we forgot to notice the Steen-draper's shop, kept by two maiden sisters, somewhat past their prime, but very respectable women in their way. They were, it is true, rather apt to inquire into and report the affairs of their neighbors; but this must not be attributed to them as any great sin, for, to say truth, the village afforded so few sources of amusement that, as they neither fished, shot, nor hunted, they had very little else to do during, at least, three quarters of their time. The Misses Martin, then, employed a portion of each day in settling the business of every one in the place, and as their tongues were somewhat feared, and they had the reputation of being wealthy, they were courted by their neighbors, invited to take tea at the surgeon's, and held a hand at cards with the solicitor. They were, however, thrifty people, notwithstanding the elevated position they held in the society of the place, served in their own shop, and let the first floor and part of the second, when any one seeking a pure and salubrious air came down to find it at Mallington.

One afternoon, then about two o'clock, in the

spring of the third year which Mr. Charlton spent in the country, a post-chaise drove into the village, and stopped at the little public-house—for it could not be called an inn—called the Bagpipes, which had been established from time immemorial at the end of the street nearest the rectory.

The Misses Martin went to the door of their shop and looked out; but they could discover nothing but that a lady in mourning and a boy of about thirteen got out of the vehicle, and entered the place of public entertainment. After they had paused for a minute to see, what more?—they returned into the shady retreat formed by cloths and printed calicoes, and were busily engaged in wondering who the strangers could be, when the lady and the boy walked with a slow and sauntering pace up the street, looking at the houses on each side of the way as they came.

"Lor, Mathilda," cried the eldest Miss Martin, as she saw them pass, "perhaps they are looking for lodgings. Tell Sally to put up the bill."

The younger sister hastened to obey, and then passed out between two pieces of muslin to see the further proceedings of the visitors.

"I declare they have gone into Dixon's," she cried; "the creature keeps her bill up always; but I am sure they will never be contented with that nasty place."

"If they are," said Miss Martin, in the true philosophical spirit of a certain fox who once had to do with the fruit of the vine, "they would not suit us, that's clear."

In about a quarter of an hour, however, the strangers, came down the hill again, looking about them as before, and, much to the satisfaction of the two ladies in the shop, they walked in as soon as they perceived the bill. Inquiries were made—the rooms to be let were looked at; no haggling about the price took place, but some additional conveniences were required, and, especially, a fourth room for a servant. All was promised by the Misses Martin that the lady demanded, and the next day she and her son were safely installed in the apartments over the shop, with a private door, *quite to themselves*. A prim and tidy girl was hired to wait upon them till the lady's own servant could come down from London; and several costly articles of dress, with a handsome dressing-case, fitted up with silver, a writing desk to correspond, and numerous applications to know where certain luxuries and conveniences were to be procured, showing habits of expense, if not affluence, convinced the Misses Martin that they had obtained as their tenants a very respectable family indeed.

The lady herself did not look more than two or three and thirty, although she was dressed in the unbecoming garb of widowhood—not, indeed, in deep weeds, for her fine flaxen hair was shown, but in such garments as many a woman feels inclined to wear long after the customs of the country require her to bear about the external signs of her bereavement. She was a very pretty woman, moreover, with bright blue eyes, fine teeth, a good complexion, soft clear skin, a chin somewhat too prominent perhaps, a beautiful hand and arm, and as smart a foot and ankle as ever were seen. She was tall, and

though not absolutely graceful—for real grace depends as much upon the mind as upon the body—yet she was well formed, plump, but not stout, with a very charming fall of the neck and shoulders, and a waist of a mere span. Her son was, as we have said, about twelve or thirteen years of age, with his mother's complexion and features; tall, strong, and active, but with something unpleasant in the expression of his face, which it was difficult to account for. His forehead was, indeed, rather low, the back of the head large, and there was a wild, rash expression about the eyes and mouth, which made the elder Miss Martin somewhat apprehensive of her tables and chairs. In every other respect he was a handsome, good-looking boy; and no sooner was he in the house than out again down to the stream, over the hill, and through the lanes, leaving his mother to arrange their rooms to her own taste, and take the trouble of unpacking the numerous trunks and portmanteaus which had been crowded upon the chaise.

Though the lady herself seemed a little thoughtful as she proceeded with this task, Miss Mathilda Martin, who gave her every assistance in her power—to see what was contained in the packages, remarked that she could occasionally laugh with a gay and merry laugh, as if she had once been possessed with what is called, in vulgar parlance, the spirit of fun, and as if, moreover, that spirit had not yet entirely gone out of her. She acquired also, even before her sister, various pieces of information of which she was desirous, and, amongst them, the name that was engraved upon the boxes, which, as they had been carried up under the lady's own eye, she had not previously been able to discover. There it stared her in the face, every trunk that was opened, "The Hon. Mrs. Latimer," and with this grand intelligence, she hurried down to inform her sister, as soon as she had satisfied her curiosity in other respects.

Now, had Mrs. Latimer lodged at Dixon's, and had the good mistress of the house ventured to attach Honorable to her name, the two Misses Martin would instantly have pronounced the lady an impostor, and asked, with a triumphant sneer, whether lord's daughters ever travelled without a single servant in yellow post-chaises, and had but one maid, who was left in London? But Mrs. Latimer was their own lodger; and that made a wonderful difference. She was for the time a part and parcel of themselves; and their importance, the very importance of their lodging, was vastly increased by the Hon. Mrs. Latimer lodging there. They looked forward into futurity; they thought of speaking for many years to all persons viewing the rooms, of their last lodger, "the Hon. Mrs. Latimer;" they even saw a likelihood of mentioning her to their acquaintances, in more familiar conversation, as their friend "the Hon. Mrs. Latimer, who had been spending a few weeks with them."

The self-same night they told it to Mr. Nethermole and to their neighbors, right and left; and when, on the day but one after, the lady herself appeared at church, every body was prepared to open the door of his pew to give her admission; and all declared that she was a very beautiful creature, and looked "quite the lady."

She was ushered, however, by the clerk into the rector's pew, which, as he had no wife, and his sister was absent, generally stood vacant. Her demeanor was composed and decorous; she looked little around her, except once, when a man in the gallery began to play upon a hautboy, beginning with a dismal squeak, to lead the congregation in singing; and, to do them justice, they followed him exactly in the same tone. She then turned round with an expression of surprise, but speedily fixed her eyes upon her book with a grave look, and joined the rest, though with more music in her tones than the other members of the choir. Her son did not, indeed, preserve the same decent solemnity, but laughed aloud; and to say truth, through the whole service displayed a sort of indifferent, careless inattention, which would have shocked the good clergyman not a little, but that luckily, both in the pulpit and the reading desk, his back was turned upon his own pew. The next seats, however, were those of Mr. Charlton and his daughter; and the worthy gentleman remarked his young neighbor's want of decorum with displeasure; but as he walked up the hill after church he perceived, well satisfied, that the fair widow, who was just before him, spoke seriously and evidently in a monitory tone to her son, who, for his part, held down his head and said nothing.

About a week after this occurrence, in writing to a friend in London, Mr. Charlton added in a postscript the following words:—"We have had an addition lately to the society of our little village, which, indeed, it much needed: a widow lady who styles herself, or whom the people where she lodges style, the Honorable Mrs. Latimer. I have fallen into a sort of acquaintance with her; but before I enter into anything like what people in general call friendship, I would fain know who she is, and something more of her history. See if you can find out, in case you cannot tell me yourself."

An answer to the letter came in the course of a few days, and on this head the writer afforded full information. Mrs. Latimer, he said, if it was the same person he meant, was a young widow, formerly the wife of the Honorable Captain Latimer, who had been a gay reckless young fellow, and had terminated a career of thoughtless folly and extravagance by shooting himself one morning in his dressing-room about two years before.

"She is but poorly provided for, I believe," continued the writer, "for his family disapproved of the match, as she was the daughter of a singing master; and though she has always conducted herself with perfect propriety, they do nothing for her, so that she only has the intorest of a younger brother's fortune, sadly shattered as he left it. Frederic Harvey, who has seen her, says she is a monstrous fine woman."

All these particulars roused Mr. Charlton's best feelings in her behalf. He pitied her deeply for the shock and distress which her husband's rash conduct must have inflicted; he felt sympathy for her, and indignation at her husband's family for the harshness with which they had treated a person, who, placed in difficult circumstances, had always acted with perfect propriety; and he compassionated a lady who, prob-

ably accustomed to affluence, and even luxury, had been so suddenly reduced to very inferior circumstances; and he admired her for the equanimity and right feeling with which she bore the reverse, and adapted her style of living to her means.

A passing bow or an occasional word was all that had yet taken place between Mr. Charlton and Mrs. Latimer, but he now walked down to call upon her, with the determination of showing her every attention in his power. The lady received him with grave politeness, thanked him for his civility, and easily smoothed down the first roughnesses of new acquaintance. She talked well and sensibly upon various subjects; never referred in the most remote degree to her own state and station, but spoke a good deal of Miss Charlton, and praised her beauty and grace of demeanor with discrimination and delicacy.

Mr. Charlton went away even better pleased with what he had seen than with what he had heard, felt convinced that the society of such a person would be of great advantage to his daughter, and after some hesitation, determined to ask her to dinner, taking care to invite some of the distant neighbors, who had wives and daughters, to meet the fair widow at his house. To her he bore the important request in person, and prefaced it by some apology in regard to having no lady of the house to receive her.

Mrs. Latimer smiled somewhat sadly, replying, "Oh, my dear sir, when people come to our time of life, and have seen many sorrows, though they may have lost many bright things with youth, yet they have gained freedom from those restraints which youth is wisely, though unwillingly, forced to impose upon itself."

"Our time of life, my dear madam!" said Mr. Charlton, shaking his head, "you must not class yourself with the good old people yet."

"Oh! I am older than I look," replied the lady, "and look, I am afraid, younger than I could wish. But to speak to your invitation, my dear sir. I really seldom go out. Indeed, I have not been anywhere since—since—for a long time, I mean."

"Nay, I will take no denial," rejoined Mr. Charlton, kindly; "and your young gentleman must come up, and amuse himself as well as he can."

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Latimer, thoughtfully; but really—yet, for the boy's sake, I must get rid of such feelings of reluctance."

"Certainly, my dear madam," replied Mr. Charlton; "you have duties which must be performed, and it is far better not to suffer feelings, however natural, however laudable, to interfere with their execution at the commencement. I shall count upon you, then, and will now take my leave."

The day of the dinner arrived. After some of the more distant guests had made their appearance, Mrs. Latimer was announced. She was dressed more plainly than usual; her widow's cap was brought further over her face; her hair was less shown. She was grave, too, and seemed a little agitated; but if such was the case, Mr. Charlton's kindness and good breeding soon put her at her ease, and everybody showed her attention and civility, for her

worthy host had communicated to those in the room what he had heard regarding the propriety of her conduct, and the sad circumstances in which she was placed. Before dinner and after dinner she showed great fondness for Miss Charlton, talked with her, smiled upon her, and admired in her to her father all those things which Mr. Charlton himself most admired in his child.

In the course of the evening there was some music; several of the young ladies were requested to sing; and one of them, after having done so, inquired if Mrs. Latimer would not favor them in the same way. She answered that she never sang anything but sacred music now; but she was prevailed upon to try a song from some favorite oratorio of the day, and nothing could be more beautiful than the manner in which she executed the task. It was chaste, high-toned, and sweet, without any effort or exuberant ornament, and every one listened, rapt and delighted till it was done, when a murmur of applause spread through the room.

From that day Mrs. Latimer became a great favorite in the neighborhood, and several invitations to dinner immediately followed, but she had chosen her course by this time, and replied, without concealment, that her means were too limited to admit of her going out far for society. In one or two instances, a kindly, though, perhaps, considering the shortness of the acquaintance, not a very delicate spirit prompted the inviters to send their own carriages for her; and in these cases she accepted. She also went out to several other dinner parties to which Miss Charlton was invited, taking a place in Mr. Charlton's carriage; but her principal intimacy was at Mallington House, and circumstances soon arose to make her almost a daily visitor there, as I shall proceed to explain.

CHAPTER III.

It very often happened, during the month or two which followed, that Mr. Charlton, sometimes accompanied by his daughter, sometimes alone, dropped in for half an hour in the morning, to see how Mrs. Latimer and her son were going on; and on more than one occasion the conversation turned upon the education of children, in regard to which the lady seemed to have thought deeply, though, to say the truth, her own offspring did not afford a favorable specimen of her practice. That circumstance, however, was easily and naturally explained by her one morning, when the boy was absent, "I have a hard task before me, my dear sir," she said, speaking of this subject. "Poor Alfred has been so terribly neglected, and so sadly spoiled, that the efforts to restrain him and make him apply are almost too much, for me. I long foresaw what would be the result, and foresaw it with fear and trembling, but the will of those who had the best right to speak was, of course, obeyed, and between contending duties I yielded to that which appeared paramount. I did not, indeed, think," she added in a low tone, "that I should be left alone to struggle with the faults encouraged by indulgence I could not counteract."

"Do you not think, my dear madam," asked Mr. Charlton, "that the best plan would be to send him to school?"

Mrs. Latimer shook her head with a rueful smile. "I cannot afford it," she said in a low tone, and then added, a moment or two after, as her words had thrown her worthy visitor into a train of thought, "No, I must be contented to do what I can myself, and for the rest must trust to masters, when I can hear of any good ones."

"There are some very fair masters in the neighborhood," replied Mr. Charlton. "With the exception of music, which he does not want, you will find all that you require. The music-master, indeed, is a very indifferent teacher, and I have on more than one occasion thought of going back to London again, in order to give Louisa better instruction."

Mrs. Latimer turned a shade paler, but the next moment she exclaimed "Oh! Mr. Charlton, I have thought of something that will indeed be delightful. You must let me be your daughter's music-mistress. It will at once be a great pleasure to me, and it will afford me the only means I ever shall have of showing you how deeply grateful I am for all the kindness you have evinced towards me."

Mr. Charlton hesitated and was embarrassed, said he could not think of Mrs. Latimer taking such trouble, and made a number of other apologies; but the lady persisted in her plan, and, as she had no piano at her lodging, it was agreed that she should come up every fine morning to give Louisa Charlton some instruction. Louisa herself was delighted, and every day Mrs. Latimer became a greater favorite both with father and daughter. She was often a companion at their breakfast table; often stayed to dinner. Her son was frequently at Mallington House, and, though by no means much approved of by Mr. Charlton, was tolerated for Mrs. Latimer's sake. She was the greatest resource to that worthy gentleman that could be imagined—his companion, his friend; and he would have been very well inclined that matters should have gone on in the same way to the close of his days, but Mrs. Latimer did not intend that it should be so.

When she had been about nine months in the place, Mr. Charlton observed, with real concern, that she grew graver and more thoughtful than ever; that she seldom smiled, and when she did so it was faintly, and not from the heart. He inquired of himself what could be the matter for some time before he inquired of any one else. But, at length, one day, when he had, during a morning call upon her, remarked that she was more serious than ever, he asked her maid, who opened the door to give him exit—a calm, staid, shrewd-looking woman—if Mrs. Latimer were ill, observing that she looked out of spirits.

"Really, sir, I do not know what is the matter," said the abigail. "I see clearly enough that my mistress is fretting about something, but I cannot tell you what it is. She has had sorrow enough, poor thing, for one so good and so beautiful."

"Pray were you with her when her husband died, Mrs. Windsor?" asked Mr. Charlton.

"Aye, that I was, sir," answered the maid,

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"and a terrible day, too. He was a wild, rash, violent man, and treated her ill enough. But still he was her husband, sir; and although as to loving him very much, that was not possible, yet the shock nearly killed her."

"Well, pray, Mrs. Windsor," rejoined Mr. Charlton, feeling that it would not be proper to push his inquiries any farther in that quarter, "if you find out that I can be of any service to Mrs. Latimer let me know. You may be perfectly sure I should be delighted to render it."

The maid promised to do so; but nothing resulted from this conversation for some time, and Mrs. Latimer still continued grave and sad. At times, indeed, when walking on the common with Mr. Charlton, or sitting with him alone, a burst of happier feeling would take place. She would give way to some playful sally; appeal to him upon some light matter of taste; discuss the subject with him eagerly; perhaps oppose his opinions at first, but, in the end, yielded invariably, and then would turn her fine blue eyes upon him, and exclaim "The women are not capable of arguing, my dear friend, and I believe we had better never attempt it." Then again, the moment after, she would fall into sad thought again, and at times her eyes would fill with tears.

At length one morning a note arrived from her, at the hour at which she usually appeared, excusing herself for not coming, as she had matters of business which would occupy her all day. A second day she excused herself, a third she had a cold; and Mr. Charlton went down in person to inquire after her. At a little distance from her door he met her son Alfred, and stopping to shake hands with the boy, naturally expressed a hope that Mrs. Latimer was not seriously indisposed.

"Oh! mamma is well enough," replied Alfred Latimer. "She is only moping. She has been moping these three or four days; but you must not tell her I said so, for she forbade me."

Mr. Charlton went on and rang at her door, nor was he refused admittance. He found her seated reading, and thinking it better to begin upon the subject that he had at heart at once, he said "My dear lady, I have remarked that you have been much out of spirits of late. Now you must not think me intrusive; but, feeling the very sincere regard for you that I do, I may be permitted to say that, as you have no one here with whom to consult, if you require advice or assistance in any way, I should feel it a slight if you did not apply to me!"

Mrs. Latimer colored and seemed a good deal agitated; but after a moment's pause, she pressed Mr. Charlton's hand in her own, saying emphatically, "Thank you! thank you! best and kindest of men. But, alas, I fear that you can give me no assistance, and that your advice in this instance would but confirm the resolution which I have already taken, with bitter regret. Oh! had I had your advice and support, long, long ago, how many sorrows might have been saved me!"

"Well, but take them now," said Mr. Charlton; "and first tell me, my dear madam, what this determination is?"

"I will," replied Mrs. Latimer, "but first you must hear a word or two of preface. Married

very young, partly at my father's persuasion, partly from the giddy thoughtlessness of youth, to a man of whom I shall only say that even then I should not have chosen him, had I had opportunity of selection, or time for thought, I endeavored to do my duty well—indeed I did, Mr. Charlton; nay, more, I tried to make my duty pleasure. Tho' rest I must pass in silence—the memory of the dead is sacred; but I have known little peace in life till I came down here. In this quiet place, and with your kind and beneficial society, I have enjoyed my first happy moments since girlhood; but, alas! now I must leave it."

Mr. Charlton started, as if she had struck him, so completely was the possibility of such an event absent from his thoughts. "But why, Mrs. Latimer! Why!" he exclaimed.

"Because," she replied, "and you will own the reason to be a good one—my means are not equal to living even in the moderate way in which I live here. I have shaped my expenditure by my income; but a sudden claim upon a part of the small property my husband left having started up, even that poor income is diminished."

"Nay, but let me look into the claim on your behalf," said Mr. Charlton; it may not be fair—it may not be just."

"Yes, it is," replied the lady, "I have been forced to become a better woman of business than you give me credit for being. I went into all the details at once about a month ago; I found that it was indubitable—though the lawyers said I might contest the validity of the documents—that the money had been received, and therefore I ordered it to be paid immediately. It is already done; my income is reduced by so much; and I have only to wait till I can receive a sufficient sum to pay a few little bills here, and then, I fear—I must—yes, indeed I must leave you," and Mrs. Latimer burst into tears.

Mr. Charlton soothed her kindly and tenderly, and when she was somewhat more composed he said, "Indeed, this shocks and grieves me deeply; and if you would but consider me really in the light which you have often said you do—namely, that of a friend, a sincere true friend—and make use of my purse as if it were your own, till this little storm be passed—"

"Mr. Charlton!" exclaimed Mrs. Latimer, drawing herself back, as if greatly surprised, "impossible! But no," she added the next moment, "I know you meant it kindly, graciously, nobly—as you do everything. But that is quite impossible. A woman cannot receive money but from a father, or a husband—nay, say not a word more on that score, or I shall think you do not respect me. As to the money, I care not for it. There are countries where I can live at a cheaper rate than here, and I am ready, willing, to live on bread and water—aye, to work for that bread, should need be; but to part with the only people who have been really kind to me—to quit the only spot where I have known tranquillity, is bitter indeed," and Mrs. Latimer wept again.

What Mr. Charlton might have replied at that moment, had he not been interrupted, who can tell? but just as he was about to answer, Alfred Latimer burst into the room, laughing at

something he had seen or done in the village. The boy was surprised to see his mother in tears, and turned a look quickly, and almost fiercely, upon Mr. Charlton, as if he had been doing something to grieve her.

Mrs. Latimer, however, held out her fair hand to her friend, saying, "Forgive me for thus giving way, and say no more upon the subject at present. We will talk about it more hereafter, when I am calmer."

"Well, then, my dear lady," replied Mr. Charlton, "I shall take it for granted that you will not rashly act in this matter till we have spoken further."

"I will take your advice in all things," answered the lady; "where should I go for counsel, if not to you, my best—I may, indeed, say only friend?"

When Mr. Charlton returned to his own house he found his mind much more perturbed than was ordinary with him, or at all agreeable. That Mrs. Latimer might quit Mallington had never entered his imagination. She had never hinted such an intention; she had seemed so happy, so contented with the place, that he had taken it for granted everything would go on just as it had gone on for an indefinite time, and the idea of losing her society, and being again reduced to the state of listless apathy in which he had been when she arrived, seemed to him a second widowhood. Yet what could he do to prevent such a result? She had reasonable grounds for such a resolution; she was, evidently resolved to receive no pecuniary assistance; and, though he might think her a little too scrupulous with so sincere a friend as himself, he honored her scruples too much to strive to shake them. The term, second-widowhood, which he had employed in his own thoughts, ran in his mind. He began to fancy that he should find his time still burdensome to him through life, unless he married again; and the expression which Mrs. Latimer had herself used, saying that a woman could only receive money from a father or a husband, was one of the first things that made him ask himself, if he did marry, who could he so well and wisely wed as herself?"

At first he wished that he were ten years younger; their ages then, he thought, might not have been so out of proportion. As it was, people would only say that he had been caught by the eye, and laugh at the old gentleman for marrying the fair young widow. Yet after all, he recollected that he was not so very aged, as grief and want of occupation, and the dark views they had engendered, made him fancy. He was barely fifty-four; Mrs. Latimer might be thirty-five, or thirty-six, for she had told him that she looked younger than she really was. There was a difference, certainly, of fifteen or sixteen years, but what of that? There was many a more disproportionate match every day; and, let the world say what it would, he was conscious that it was not for beauty, or any ephemeral advantage, that he chose her, but merely for the sake of an amiable and pleasant companion, who had soothed his melancholy, and whose high qualities he knew.

Thus Mr. Charlton went on, diminishing some objections in his own eyes, and boldly meeting others with a flat negative, till dinner time;

and yet he was by no means satisfied, and still less decided. He thought of his former wife—of her he had loved with the fondest affection—who had been the sunshine of his home, the light of his steps, the pride, as well as the darling, of his heart; and when he looked into his own bosom he found nothing like the same feelings there towards Mrs. Latimer that he had experienced towards her. True, it was not to be expected—true, perhaps, it was better not. This ought to be a marriage of reason, whereas the other had been a marriage of love. But then, again, he thought of his daughter; and, why or wherefore he could not tell, his heart misgave him. It was but a prejudice, he fancied. One heard so much of step-mothers, and perhaps they might occasionally act ill, but there must be exceptions—indeed, he had known them himself, and Mrs. Latimer already showed for Louisa almost the affection of a mother.

Yet he was not satisfied; and at dinner he was thoughtful, absent, almost fretful. Towards nine in the evening, as he was trying to turn his mind to other thoughts, with the prudent resolution of sleeping over the matter, and just when Louisa had retired to bed, one of his old servants announced to him that Mrs. Windsor, Mrs. Latimer's maid, desired to see him.

"Show her in, show her in!" cried Mr. Charlton, in some agitation; and when the abigail appeared he exclaimed, "Good evening, Mrs. Windsor, I hope your lady is not ill!"

"No, sir," replied the maid; and then waiting till the door was closed, she added, "but you told me, sir, to inform you if I found out what made my mistress so grave and sad, and as I discovered to-night I thought I would come up and tell you, especially as you are somewhat concerned, sir."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Charlton, in some surprise; "how is that, Mrs. Windsor?"

"Why, sir," answered his companion pausing and thinking for a moment, with a grave and embarrassed look, "it is an unpleasant thing to tell, but yet, as I was saying, I think it is but right that you should know, for I am sure you, who are quite the master of the place, as I may say, will soon put a stop to it."

"If it be anything unpleasant to your mistress, and I have power to do so," replied Mr. Charlton, "I certainly will; but what is it, Mrs. Windsor?"

"Why, sir, it is just this," the maid proceeded, after another hesitating pause—"those two old cats at whose house we lodge, the Miss Martins, are the greatest gossips and scandal-makers in the world, and they can't even keep their tongues off Mrs. Latimer, who never had a word said against her in her life."

"Indeed!" cried Mr. Charlton, with a tremulous emotion of the lip, "and pray what can they find to say against her now?"

"Truly, they must needs talk about your coming so often to see her, sir," rejoined Mrs. Windsor, as if with an effort, "and about her coming up here to Miss Charlton, sir—that's what they say; and I have found out that three or four days ago that old tabby, the eldest one, had the face to go up to my lady and speak to her about it, and to say it was not respectable."

"She did, did she!" exclaimed Mr. Charlton, his cheek growing very hot: "well, my good lady, I will soon settle that business!"

"They are cunning old creatures," continued the maid, with a scornful smile, "for they never said a word till they thought Mrs. Latimer was going to leave them, and then they chose to begin. However, sir, I thought it right to let you know, for I never like any one to be spoken ill of behind his back, and to have things put upon him that he never dreamt of—especially a gentleman so kind and good to every one as you are."

"You did very right, Mrs. Windsor," replied Mr. Charlton, "there's a guinea for you. Do not say anything to Mrs. Latimer about your having seen me. I suppose she did not know you were coming here!"

"Oh! yes, sir," said the maid, "she had told me to take a note to Miss Charlton, which I have given to your man; but she did not know that I was going to speak with you, and, for heaven's sake, don't tell her, sir. She would be so angry."

"No, no, make yourself easy, Mrs. Windsor," replied Mr. Charlton, "I will not betray you; but I will find means to put a stop to their idle gossip, depend upon it, and now good night. I shall call down before luncheon to-morrow."

Thus they parted, and Mr. Charlton walked up and down the room for at least half an hour. A new and powerful motive was given to him for doing as he wished to do; nay, it was better than a motive—it was an excuse. Mrs. Latimer's reputation was affected by his friendship for her, there was no means of remedying that evil but one, and Mr. Charlton from that moment determined to put it in her power at least to do so. He was somewhat anxious and nervous upon the subject, indeed. She might take a different view of the matter—she might look upon the difference of age as an insurmountable bar. She might like him very well as a friend, but not think of him as a husband. Yet, when he had retired to rest, and thought over a thousand little traits which he had perceived, he began to hope that he was not altogether so indifferent to her. That she had a great regard for him was evident; that to abandon his society was painful to her she had acknowledged; and he remembered more than once having caught her eyes fixed upon his face with an expression of interest. He was conscious that he was a good-looking man of his age, and now he began to wish that he had not continued to wear powder and a pigtail. That, however, could not now be helped, for he would not venture upon the ridicule of cutting off the latter incumbrance upon the eve of a declaration, and thinking that a sleepless night would not improve his personal appearance, he turned upon his side and courted the drowsy god. As usual in such cases, the god was somewhat slow to come, and Mr. Charlton was up early the next morning refreshing himself with a walk in the garden. At breakfast his daughter sat opposite to him, and entertained him with her young conversation; but every time his eyes turned upon her his heart smote him. However, his resolution was taken, and about eleven away he went to execute it.

He found the fair widow looking, he thought

more fascinating than ever, and, luckily for his purpose, alone. Her eyes beamed when she saw him; and she held out her soft delicate hand with a smile so enchanting, that Mr. Charlton began to feel emotions of tenderness which carried him on wonderfully after a while, though they interrupted him a little at first.

"You seem busy, my dear Mrs. Latimer," he said, looking at her writing-desk, which was open before her, and at the table covered with papers. "I hope I do not disturb you; but even if I do I must still intrude a little, for I have one or two things to say."

"I was only putting my desk into order for a journey," said Mrs. Latimer, with the smile passing away, and giving place to a look of sadness; "for I see, my excellent friend, it must come to that."

"Nay, I think not," replied Mr. Charlton, seating himself beside her on the little hard-stuffed rosewood sofa of the lodging. "I think not," he repeated, "unless, indeed, you be very resolute to go. There is such a thing, my dear lady, as a choice of evils in this world, and I am going to put such an alternative before you. You have expressed great unwillingness to go from Mallington, and I believe you to be quite sincere, for where one is loved and esteemed, there one generally finds some sort of pleasure. You have, also, been kind enough to say that the loss of my daughter's and my own society had no slight part in causing your unwillingness."

"A part, my kind friend, so great, that the alternative you propose would be a very painful one indeed if I did not choose it to avoid such grief. For yourself, I can only say that you have acted towards me a part that has ever made me look upon you as an elder brother."

"Well, my dear madam," said Mr. Charlton, "I tell you the alternative is but one of two evils: it is for you to judge which is the greater. I wish you, then, to stay at Mallington—to change your present residence, and to come to mine."

Mrs. Latimer looked all amazement; but Mr. Charlton proceeded with more calmness than he had himself expected—"This, my sweet friend, can but be done at the expense of a great sacrifice. To render it right—to render it possible, I may say—you must consent to give your hand to a man much older than yourself, and to make him happy at the expense, perhaps, of some regrets."

Mrs. Latimer pressed her hand upon her heart as if its beating were too much for her; and then, bending down her head, she hid her eyes in her handkerchief and wept.

"Nay, nay," said Mr. Charlton, taking her hand somewhat alarmed, "I did not intend to grieve you."

"Grieve me! grieve me!" cried Mrs. Latimer, raising her beautiful eyes swimming with tears, but with a smile upon her lips. "Oh! my noble and generous friend, you know not what I feel;" and she placed her other hand in his also. "But I cannot suffer you," she said, after a start. "No! I cannot suffer you to make such a sacrifice yourself. You know that I am poor; but you do not know how poor, my good friend. Doubts I have none, but at this moment I have less than one hundred per

annum. You can, you ought to look for a wife far better endowed than I am. Still in the prime of life, with large fortune, and everything to make a woman happy, you have every right to expect—"

"Hush, hush, hush!" said Mr. Charlton, interrupting her, "I will not hear another word upon such subjects. If you can feel that you will be happy with me, if you will be a mother to my daughter and a companion to myself, the journey from Mallington is at an end."

"For ever!" said Mrs. Latimer, leaning her head upon his shoulder. "Oh!" she murmured in a soft tone, "Oh! that I had known you earlier in life, as I said the other day, what misery it would have saved me. But how rarely is it that one meet in early years the only person who can make one happy."

We have, however, intruded somewhat too far upon scenes that are generally private, and we must therefore leave Mrs. Latimer and Mr. Charlton alone to settle all about the marriage without our presence. We have not been the only ones, however, dear readers, who overheard that tender conversation. Ah no! Miss Mathilda Martin, having first ascertained that Mrs. Windsor had gone out as soon as she had let Mr. Charlton in, was upon the stairs close to the door—so close, indeed, that sometimes her ear, sometimes her eye very nearly touched the keyhole. Fie, Miss Mathilda; surely you are not listening! So it was however that after a certain time Miss Mathilda descended to the shop, with a cheek highly colored, and an eye full of excitement. "Oh! yes indeed," she said to her sister, "it is just so! quite as we thought. Don't say a word, Winifred. I heard it with my own ears. He is now going to forget all decency and to keep her up at his own house. I heard him, I can assure you. He said these very words 'I wish you to stay at Mallington—to change your present residence, and to come to mine.'"

The reader will perceive that Miss Mathilda, as many other persons do, had listened no longer, and for no better object, than to confirm her preconceived opinions.

"And what did she say?" cried Miss Martin, eagerly. "Will she go?"

"Oh, to be sure!" replied Mathilda, "no doubt of it. There were plenty of 'dear friends' and 'sweet friends' going, I can assure you. Ah! the nasty old man, how I hate him."

"She's the worst of the two," answered her sister; "a trumpy minx, with her high airs. Why, she never once asked us to take a cup of tea; as if we were dirt. I should not wonder if she were no widow at all, but just some cast-off, with her boy."

Mrs. Latimer was evidently lost in the opinion of the two Misses Martin; and after having thus discussed the mistress, they proceeded to assail the maid. Of her they said what was true enough, that she was an awful jade; for though they had not exactly hit upon Mrs. Latimer's real faults, she being, perhaps, the last person on earth to be misled by any man, young or old, yet their closer observation of good Mrs. Windsor had given them a good insight into her character. As they were in progress, however, they were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of good Dr. Western, the rector, who, after

ordering a few articles of clothing for some of his poor, went on to ask if Mrs. Latimer was at home.

"Oh, dear yes, sir," said Miss Martin, she has got Mr. Charlton with her, as usual, sir."

"She is soon going to quit, however," added Mathilda, "and I cannot say I am sorry."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the clergyman, with considerable surprise, "may I ask why? Mrs. Latimer is a very respectable person, though not rich, and I trust that you have too much good sense and good feeling, Miss Martin, to value any one merely as they may be wealthy."

"Ay, but is she so respectable, doctor?" asked Miss Martin, with a significant look.

"I have the best assurance that she is so," replied Dr. Western. "I will add something more, my good lady. Knowing the propensity of all small places to deal uncharitably with the characters of strangers, and having last week heard something that did not please me of reports set about respecting this lady, I took the trouble of writing for information, and find, as I supposed, that those reports are without foundation, and that she is in every respect what she seems; in a word, one who has acted through life with perfect propriety, even though placed in very painful and difficult situations. I trust, therefore, that we shall hear no more of this, for it is neither Christian nor generous."

Dr. Western, who had purposely given the Misses Martin an opportunity of drawing this reproach upon their own heads, then proceeded to pay his intended visit to Mrs. Latimer; and it was remarked by the ladies of the shop that he and Mr. Charlton walked out and proceeded down the street together.

A vague rumor, in the course of the subsequent week, spread through the village that Mrs. Latimer was not long to be Mrs. Latimer. Louisa Charlton, or Mr. Charlton, was always with her; the carriages of neighboring gentry were frequently at her door; sempstresses and dressmakers were busily employed; and the Misses Martin, beginning to find that they had made a very great mistake, were her most humble servants, fawning egregiously on even Mrs. Windsor, and declaring that "Dear Mrs. Latimer was certainly one of the sweetest creatures that ever was seen."

Dear Mrs. Latimer, however, did not forget them; she was perfectly civil, indeed; but she bided her time.

At length, on a Saturday night an elderly gentleman, who was reported to be an army agent, came down to Mallington, spent the evening with Mrs. Latimer and Mr. Charlton, and took a bed at the house of the latter. The next day the lady appeared at the church divested of her weeds; and on the Tuesday following, at an early hour, the widower and the widow stood together before the altar, to be made man and wife. The army agent, who had been a friend of her former husband, acted as father upon the present occasion; a small party of the country neighbors were witnesses to the ceremony. Louisa Charlton and Alfred Latimer were invited to spend a few days with a friend who lived about seven miles from Mallington, and Mr. Charlton and his fair bride set out upon a tour into Warwickshire.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS was a great discoverer, as the reader is undoubtedly aware; but he never made half the discoveries that Mr. Charlton did within one year from the time that Mrs. Latimer gave him her hand at the altar. Not that she became ill to him; for, on the contrary, she redoubled her affectionate manner, and exerted herself to be more enchanting than ever; soothed, flattered, fondled him. But Mr. Charlton had now nearer means of observation, and he was naturally a clear-sighted man. He was as fond of her as ever—he would not have lost her society for the world; but he was neither old enough nor young enough to be blind to all the little traits of character which presented themselves in his fair wife; and all those traits tended to show that Mrs. Charlton was one of those ladies who never act without an object. She calculated her game with the most precise and definite computation, and worked boldly towards the result which she wished to arrive at by the means she thought most likely to attain it. From her earliest years she had been taught to consider her own interests in the first place, and had willingly seconded her father in ennobling the son of a noble family into a connection which all his friends disapproved. His first object was to seduce her, but though not without strong passions, they were not of that character which were likely to make her fall a sacrifice to the designs of any man. She could hate heartily, but love was not one of her weaknesses; and thus she skillfully led him on to make her his wife as the only means of possessing her. His fortune, never very great, she aided to impair, for she had tastes and habits as expensive as his own; and as he was of a violent and irritable disposition, and she had no object in soothing him, the coolness with which she listened to the details of his difficulties, and the little care she displayed in extricating him from them, often drove him into fits of passion, which produced scenes that caused all but very close observers to pity the sweet creature his wife very much. She had an admirable art too, of always putting him in the wrong; and as she was certainly ill-treated—for he was known more than once to strike her—and as she resisted, without any effort, many an attempt to seduce her from the right path made by that husband's dissolute associates, the world in general gave her credit for forbearance only equal to her virtue. Thus had passed her younger days, till at length, in a fit of rage and despair, Captain Latimer lost the use of his reason, and raised his hand against his own life.

Mrs. Latimer had then, as we have seen, set up the interesting young widow, and had visited various parts of England in that capacity before she touched upon Mallington. At the latter place, she only proposed at first to look about her for a month; and finding there a clergyman apparently well to do, and a single man, her first thought was that perhaps, in course of time, she might become Mrs. Western. Perceiving very soon, however, that Dr. Western was not very accessible, and learning that the large house at the top of the hill belonged to a widower of great wealth, she deter-

mined to change her plan, in as much as a campaign against the heart of Mr. Charlton seemed open to more easy tactics, and because the object to be gained was greater. Affluence and ease, carriages, horses, servants, were things that Mrs. Latimer liked very much, and it was well worth a little study and art to obtain such advantages. The disposition of Mr. Charlton was easily read—Mrs. Latimer shaped her conduct accordingly; her maid, Mrs. Windoor, without any full explanation being necessary between mistress and servant, seconded her skillfully; and the result has been already seen by the reader.

It is an invariable rule, however, which often tends to bring down retribution on the head of devils, that we undervalue the good sense of persons whom we have once taken in. Never cheat any one, dear reader; for depend upon it you will think him a fool over after, till perchance he cheats you in return. Now, Mrs. Latimer, or, as we must henceforth call her, Mrs. Charlton, did undervalue the good sense of her second husband. She only recollected the result, that she had deceived him into thinking her all he wished, and she forgot the art she had displayed in making him think so. She forgot, also, that she was now placed before his eyes in the microscope of matrimony, and she did not exactly guard all her sayings and doings with that scrupulous care which would have been necessary to keep up the illusion. One great object was gained—she was his wife—and she thought she might have a little repose. She had another great object, it is true; to induce him to leave her at his death a large share of his fortune; but she trusted to habit and natural tenderness, and her own skill in pleasing, to obtain that very satisfactory result. Mr. Charlton had, indeed, settled upon her, previous to their marriage, an annual sum sufficient for her maintenance as his widow, in case of his decease, but Mrs. Latimer had, on various accounts, not exacted as large a jointure as, perhaps, she might have obtained had she, to use an angler's term, "played her fish" after she had hooked him. But two causes prevented her doing so; in the first place, the character she had assumed, and which it was necessary to keep up, was repugnant to such a course; and in the next, she was naturally of an impatient disposition, and eager to enjoy the fair prospect before her. Thus, though she delicately hinted to her friend the army agent that some settlement might be necessary, yet she left the matter entirely in his hands; and he, for his part, thought the proposal of Mr. Charlton on that score very liberal.

After a bridal tour of somewhat more than a month, Mr. and Mrs. Charlton returned to Mallington house; and the lady's taste for expense and display began to show itself. Her husband, however, did not object; he could well afford it, and, indeed, had somewhat reproached himself in days gone by with living too far within his income, solely from not knowing how to spend it reasonably. His former wife had no such habits, indeed, and the contrast struck him not altogether pleasantly; but he said nothing, and only insured that his expenses should be kept within due bounds. Then Mrs. Charlton thought it right to see the trade of the

village improved by the establishment of a rival shop, in opposition to the Misses Martin. Encouragement was given to a speculative tradesman of the neighboring town to break in upon the monopoly so long enjoyed by those ladies, and as he had all Mrs. Charlton's custom, and her strongest recommendation, besides smart new articles, which had never been seen in Mallington before, the old shop was soon neglected, the dull-colored prints and muslins hung unpurchased in the windows, and the Misses Martin, growing every day sorer and more sour, rued the hour when they had put up the bill of lodgings which had caught the widow's eye, and mentally gave her over to ruin and condemnation.

Neither of this did Mr. Charlton wholly approve, but his fair wife took care to conceal the animus of this proceeding from his eyes, and he was, therefore, obliged to content himself with her notions of free trade and anti-monopoly. One thing, however, did annoy him; he had forgotten that, in marrying the widow, he ran a great risk of marrying her son too, and Alfred Latimer soon gave him cause to repent of having done so. He proved a wild, capricious, rash, unfeeling boy, and it became evident very speedily, that his spoiling had not been entirely on his father's part. He was very ignorant, very arrogant; and, with none of those principles which, implanted in very early youth, prove sooner or later the correctors of follies and the tapers of passions, he seemed to have no idea but of indulgence and amusement.

After having given way for about six months, Mr. Charlton, moved by a sense of duty to the boy himself, shook off his desire of ease and tranquillity, and represented to his wife the absolute necessity of sending him to school. He proposed Eton, and offered to provide liberally for his expenses there, saying that of course he looked upon her son nearly in the light of his own. But Mrs. Charlton was in despair at the idea; she showed in feeling terms that he had been so long brought up at home that the change to a public school would be more severe and trying to him than to other lads; and all that her husband could obtain by his most reasonable arguments was, that he should be sent to a private school some fifteen miles off, where she might be at hand herself to watch over him.

Not long after this Mrs. Charlton hinted to her husband that it might be better if their dear Louisa were sent to a finishing school in London. She suggested that it would give a polish to her manners, a tone, a style to her appearance and demeanor that never could be acquired in country society; that all the accomplishments which she possessed wanted the perfecting touch of the first masters, and that it was good for all young people to see a little of the world before they had to play an active part in it.

Mr. Charlton heard her to an end with perfect composure, but then replied gravely, but not unkindly, "No, my dear. She never sets her foot in a school."

He said no more at first, and Mrs. Charlton was inclined to argue the point; but he stopped her abruptly, adding, "Her mother was never at a school; she had a great abhorrence of

them. I promised her that Louisa never should be sent to one, and that promise I will keep."

Mrs. Charlton burst into tears, and Mr. Charlton quitted the room.

She found that she had injured herself, however; and hastened to retrieve her false move by renewed kindness to her step-daughter, towards whom, to say sooth, she had somewhat cooled since her marriage; but she did not love Louisa the more for being the subject of her first dispute with her husband. In manner she was sweet and gentle to Louisa Charlton, always calling her either My love, or My dear Louisa; but there were many small traits which showed to Louisa herself, and, what was of still greater importance, to Mr. Charlton also, that there was little sincere affection. Often in a kindly tone, and with numerous professions of regard and assurances that she did it for the child's own good, she would reprove Louisa for one little act or another, and lecture her upon her conduct and demeanor. She affected to think that it was her duty to do so, and therefore did it before her husband; but Mr. Charlton was very keen-sighted in regard to his child, and the first question which he asked himself was, whether the censure was just, before he inquired whether his new wife was only actuated by a sense of duty or by some other motive. He generally found reason to think, however, that Louisa was in the right; for though she made no defence, and bore all meekly, yet she had an advocate in her father's heart, and a judge in his sense of justice which did her right, contrary to Mrs. Charlton's expectations. That lady, indeed, only strove to produce an unfavorable impression on her husband of his daughter's conduct and character; but she was not at all aware that Mr. Charlton was silently, and in his own mind, trying them both, and generally giving judgment against her. She did not at all understand at first, and, indeed, never fully understood, the exact nature of his love of quiet and his abhorrence of discussions. She often thought that she had gained her point, and produced the result she intended, because he said nothing. She fancied he did not see and comprehend, because he did not oppose or reprove; but, in truth, Mr. Charlton was always analyzing and forming his estimate by the accumulation of facts which he observed. Thus, on one or two occasions when his quietness had induced Mrs. Charlton to go on to a point where he felt it his duty to oppose decidedly what he thought wrong, and some little dispute took place in consequence, Mrs. Charlton believed that it would all be soon forgotten; but she deceived herself. It was a new page written in her history—a fresh line in the portrait which her husband was constantly drawing in his own mind.

These occurrences were more frequent when her son was at home during the holidays than at other times; for his wild rash spirit, his obstinacy and selfishness, were constant sources of annoyance to Mr. Charlton, and were as constantly defended, palliated, or concealed by the mother. Sometimes, too, in spite of all her skill and self-command, the strong and violent passions which were in her bosom would burst forth with a vindictive fire, which startled and alarmed her husband. Thus, one day, about a

year after their marriage, the boy was brought in by the head gardener (who had often complained of the destruction he committed in the garden) for a more unpardonable offence. The man appeared in the hall, where the young gentleman's mother was then standing, holding him firmly by the collar, notwithstanding his kicking, struggling, and biting; and he at once informed the lady that Master Alfred had that moment destroyed the whole melon beds, and broken the glasses of the frames, in revenge for having been prevented from knocking off the blossoms of a fruit tree with a switch. The man spoke calmly and respectfully; but the boy, furious with passion, accused him of striking and maltreating him, and soon made his mother a participator in his anger. The idea of her son dragged in by the collar by a simple gardener was enough to excite her indignation; and ordering the man to quit his hold immediately, without making any answer to his complaint, she took her son by the hand, and, with raised color and flashing eyes, sought Mr. Charlton in the library. Trying to subdue her voice to some degree of calmness, she demanded that Blackmore, the gardener, should be immediately dismissed, for daring to strike poor Alfred, for some of his little follies in the garden; and she proceeded to make out as aggravated a case against the man as possible.

Mr. Charlton heard her calmly, but with his eye resting more firmly on her flushed cheek than was pleasant to her, and then called the boy to him, saying, "Come hither, Alfred, and tell me how all this has happened. But, before you speak, remember I must have the exact truth, which, I am sorry to say, you do not always give. Now, what occurred between you and Blackmore?"

The boy went on, detailed the circumstances according to his own version, admitted with apparent frankness that he had been switching the blossoms on the wall, but declared that the man had taken the stick from him, and struck him with it, and that it was in running away from him that he had jumped upon the melon beds and broken the frames. The story was not well arranged, for a very short investigation would have shown that three frames had been destroyed, with all the wanton fury of passion; but Mr. Charlton made no investigation, and remained silent for a minute after the boy's tale, broken by tears of rage, had come to an end.

"Well, my dear," cried Mrs. Charlton, impatiently, "have I not a right to demand that he be discharged immediately?"

"No, Emily," replied Mr. Charlton; "he cannot be discharged."

"And pray why not, Mr. Charlton?" asked his wife.

"Because, my dear," was the answer, "Alfred has told a most gross and shameful falsehood. I was standing at the window at the time, and saw the whole affair. If you will follow my advice, you will send Alfred back to school this very day, as a punishment for the lie he has told, and the bad spirit he has displayed. As to discharging Blackmore for simply doing his duty, that is out of the question."

Mrs. Charlton made no answer, but it was a terrible struggle between prudence and passion.

She burst into tears, however, and, taking her son by the hand, quitted the room. There was another line drawn in her picture; and a darker one still was to come. Blackmore remained for about two months more in the service of his old master, and then gave warning. Mr. Charlton asked no explanation, and the man offered none; but the former was well aware that the place had been made too uncomfortable for the man to remain in it.

Although Louisa Charlton had not sufficient knowledge of the human heart to analyze and examine as her father did, yet she *felt* the character of her step-mother, if I may use the term. She knew that she was not loved by her, and that her tenderest tones and sweetest terms were not real. She avoided her as much as possible, then, and Mrs. Charlton was very glad of it; for she was, somewhat too apparently, anxious to be free from Louisa's society. If she were going out to drive or to walk she always contrived to believe that "the dear child" was busy about something—that she had this to study or that to do. But Mr. Charlton, in his quiet way, soon put a moral restraint upon her in these respects. When such excuses for not taking his daughter were made, he remained at home, saying he would wait till she had done and then walk with her. This was a course which his fair wife did not at all approve of, as by that means the daughter became her husband's companion, not herself; and when she found that it was systematically pursued she altered her conduct, not without some apprehension of having made another false move.

Louisa was always gentle, and kind and affectionate, and treated her father's wife with perfect respect; but even that Mrs. Charlton did not like, for she would fain have discovered something substantial to find fault with. As the sweet girl grew up, however, and displayed promises of great beauty, Mrs. Charlton thought of a change of plans; and in her own mind laid out a scheme for uniting Louisa to her son—thus securing possession of the whole of Mr. Charlton's wealth. The great obstacle, indeed, was the boy's own disposition, of which she well knew neither father nor daughter approved; and from that moment she strove eagerly with the lad—not to make him amend, but rather conceal his faults. Advice, exhortations, reproaches, were all employed in vain, and her own indulgence tended to frustrate her object. Each day as he advanced in life Alfred Latimer showed himself more headstrong and wild, and a taste for low society began to display itself when at home; for the quiet cheerfulness of Mr. Charlton, and even the gayer gentleness of Louisa, were not at all to his taste. Towards the latter, indeed, he showed some affection of a particular kind; but even after they had become the young man and the young woman it never assumed the character of love. It was, in a degree, that of a brother for a sister, by which name, indeed, he always called her, in spite of all Mrs. Charlton could say; but it was less strong, less elevated. At times he would be angry and sullen with her for days together; at others would forget her entirely in his own pursuits; at others would tease and give her pain. But whenever he was in trouble or distress, he would fly to her, even in preference

to his mother; and often, by her advice, as assistance, or intercession, she would extricate him from the difficulties that his own faults and follies had brought upon him. Louisa, who was gentle and kind to all, was so to Alfred Latimer especially; but it was only because he was the son of her father's wife. She approved neither his character nor his conduct; she disliked his society; she shrank from his conversation, except when he sought her for counsel or aid; and the more she saw of him, the more unworthy she thought him, till she learned at length to regard him with something like fear, though it was more fear for himself, and for the follies and evils he might commit, than for the annoyance he might bring upon her.

I have said above that Mrs. Charlton was not pleased at his giving Louisa the name of sister; and the reason was, that she wished to bring Mr. Charlton and Louisa herself to look upon him in a very different light. She strove for this object gradually, however, shutting her eyes to all the many motives which could make her husband reject such a son-in-law. She endeavored to persuade him that all Alfred's faults would pass away in time, that they were but errors of youth and over indulgence; that the world and the weight of high duties would keep down his too high spirits and warm passions; and she attempted to rouse pride in favor of the alliance she had in view, by casually speaking at different times of the probability—which she represented as great—of her son succeeding to the title and estates of his cousin, whom she declared to be a sickly and feeble youth, not likely to see maturity.

Mr. Charlton had by this time gained deep insights, and he heard her without any marked reply, waiting to discover her object; for he now knew that she always had one. At length one evening when Louisa had gone to bed, and she and her husband were sitting alone, Mrs. Charlton, as he seemed in a cheerful and yielding humor, ventured to say, "I know not what you feel, my dear; but if I could see my poor boy united to a woman who would guide him aright; and, by occupying all his affections, give him those high objects which I am sure are all that is wanting to correct his errors, I should think the great end of life attained."

"I fear such a one would be difficult to find, Emily," replied Mr. Charlton; "and for her sake, poor thing, if ever he is destined to meet with such a one, it would be better to let his passions be broken by the hard struggle of the world, or tamed by their own excess."

"Such a one is our dear Louisa," said Mrs. Charlton, in a hesitating tone.

"She is certainly one to make any man happy," replied her father, gravely, "but she is out of the question, and her like is not easily found."

"But why is she out of the question?" asked Mrs. Charlton, a little irritated. "Suppose they loved each other."

"That cannot be supposed," said Mr. Charlton. "They are brother and sister, indeed, and may love each other as such, but my curse would follow any other tie between them."

He spoke in a tone that the lady had never heard him use before, and, as he did so, he rose as if to put an end to the conversation.

The next morning her husband was up somewhat earlier than usual, and went down into the village before breakfast. He had not been long gone, however, before one of the lawyer's clerks came up to ask for a memorandum book which Mr. Charlton had left in his library. The servant could not find it, and applied to his mistress, who was now making breakfast. At first she told Louisa to go and look, but the moment after a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and she exclaimed "No; I know where it is. I will go."

She did, and found the book; but before she gave it to the man, who was waiting, she unclasped it, and looked at the first page, as if to see that it was the right one. Her eye instantly lighted upon the words "Mem. for will:—If, contrary to my express commands, Louisa should by any chance marry A. L., everything to go to next heir."

Mrs. Charlton restrained herself with pain while she handed the book to the man; but the moment he was gone she gave way to a burst of indescribable rage. Her pretty features became animated with the expression of a demon, and in her wrath she threw off the table and broke to pieces an inkstand which she knew her husband valued greatly. It had belonged to his first wife. When she returned to the breakfast room she was still under the influence of the same feelings; she scolded the servants, she spoke angrily to Louisa, she fell into fits of sombre thought; but the moment Mr. Charlton's stepson entered the hall, she was changed as if by enchantment. Her sweet smile came back like sunshine returning to a stormy sky, and she was all grace and gentleness when he seated himself at the breakfast table.

She saw that her object was hopeless from that moment, however; and all that remained was to secure herself as large a share of Mr. Charlton's property as possible. For that purpose she redoubled all her efforts, and the next three or four years passed in very skilful, but very ineffectual manœuvres. Mr. Charlton's eyes were open; and he was not to be deceived any more. He well knew that to secure peace and tranquillity, and to induce his wife to behave with tenderness to his child, it was necessary to appear blind to everything but any unkindness towards her; and he did appear so. Mrs. Charlton soon found that to show unkindness, or even coldness to Louisa, was to injure herself; and, therefore, before her husband she was as gentle as a lamb, though often at other moments she ventured upon an insinuation, or a taunt which wounded deeply a heart very susceptible of, and accustomed to, kindness. Louisa complained not, however, for she knew that to do so would be to embitter the life of her father; but neither in this was Mr. Charlton blinded; for he often remarked, when he joined his wife and daughter, that the latter was very grave, and he attributed a mood not natural to her to its right cause.

To escape from conversation that was painful to her, and from thoughts that were painful also, Louisa Charlton often would walk down to the rectory, where good Dr. Western, and a widowed sister, of nearly his own age, who now lived with him, offered her society, if not cheer-

ful, serene, and if not amusing, instructive. She joined in all their works of charity towards the poor of the neighborhood, and contributed with a liberal hand to relieve many a case of urgent and unmerited distress; for she was nearly eighteen years of age, and her father took care that an allowance proportioned to the fortune she was to inherit should be placed at her own disposal. Mrs. Charlton was always glad to see her go; and generally, when a reason was thus afforded for not taking her with them, hurried Mr. Charlton to distant visits, or to parties of pleasure which did not always agree very well with his somewhat failing health. He was now above sixty years of age, and his originally strong constitution and regular habits might have seemed to promise a green old age; but there was something preyed upon him. Perhaps it was regret, not unmingled with self-reproach; and if so, it was natural that the restraint he put upon his own feelings to prevent their ever appearing in the eyes of either his wife or daughter, should aggravate the sufferings inflicted by a consciousness of having acted weakly.

Alfred Latimer was now frequently absent; for Mrs. Charlton had found it necessary, for the success of her own plans, to prevent the follies and vices, which were becoming more conspicuous as he grew towards manhood, from being obtruded upon the eyes of her husband; and he had been placed under the care of a clergyman at some distance, to prepare him for college. But his stay there did not tend in any great degree to improve his disposition, for the tutor was an indolent man, with whom he might study if he pleased, or remain idle if he liked; and, as the reader may well suppose, he showed strongly his affection for "the mother of vice."

Louisa had commenced her nineteenth year, and her birth-day had been celebrated with affectionate joy by Mr. Charlton, when the morning after, as he was rising from his chair, he fell back insensible. The surgeon, Mr. Nothersole, was sent for in haste, and by copious bleeding relieved him for the time; but he remained ill for some months, and never fully recovered his health. Alfred Latimer was at Mallington at the time, and remained there while his step-father was obliged to keep his room, wandering about the country, no one knew whither, coming home late at night; and making constant demands upon his mother's purse. One day, however, Edmonds, the park-keeper of Lord Mallington, appeared at Mallington House, and demanded to speak with Mrs. Charlton. He was shown into her presence, and, in his usual bluff and straightforward manner, proceeded to inform her that her son had been seen on the preceding night in the preserves of the earl.

"He had two other young fellows with him, madam," he continued, "and I dare say the young gentleman only did it for a spree; but there were guns fired and pheasants killed, that is certain. Now I thought it best to come and tell you, madam, for these fellows he was with are not fit company for him, and will get him into mischief; and as he has been always very civil to our people when he has called in at the cottage, I thought it a pity to see him go on so."

Mrs. Charlton was really shocked and alarmed, for she had previously entertained no idea of the length to which her son's taste for low society had been carried. She thanked the man sincerely, then, for his warning, and in order to break through such dangerous connections, as well as to remove him before Mr. Charlton was well enough to come down and resume his usual habits, she acted with more firmness than usual where Alfred was concerned, and sent him back to his tutor's with the most serious admonition she had ever bestowed upon him in her life. He might perhaps have resisted, for he seldom showed any great reverence for his mother's authority, but the fact of having been discovered by the gamekeepers frightened him, and he obeyed.

At the end of about a month after his departure, Mr. Charlton had sufficiently recovered to go out and walk about the village and the neighborhood, as he had been accustomed to do, and his daughter Louisa was now his constant companion; for Mrs. Charlton, who had got into habits of great self-indulgence, had, by this time, grown marvellously stout and heavy, and loved the exercise in her carriage better than on foot. His conversation was now generally serious, and sometimes sad; and he often referred to the probability of his death taking place at no very distant period.

"I speak thus," my dear Louisa, he said one day, "because I would have you prepare your mind for such an event, as mine is prepared. I know how terribly the loss of one we love comes upon those who have never looked forward to it; and after such a fit of apoplexy as I have had, one always lives with a drawn sword hung over one, which may fall at any moment."

Louisa wiped some drops from her eyes, but only replied, "There is one favor I have to ask, my dear father, which is this: whenever you are ill again, do not let me be kept out of your room. You know that I will be quiet and not disturb you, and the anxiety and pain of being absent from you, and not knowing really and truly how you are is too terrible," and poor Louisa wept.

"Were you kept out when I was ill lately?" asked Mr. Charlton gravely.

"Yes, my dear father," replied Louisa, "several times. I was told, when I came, that you did not wish to be disturbed, that you would rather not see me then—as if I would have disturbed you, when I would sit by your bedside for hours, without noise or movement, if they would let me; I can bear anything but to be kept from you."

"You shall not, my sweet child!" said Mr. Charlton. "I thought there was something of the kind, from not seeing you so often as I wished for. But I understand it all, and it shall not occur again."

Whether the attempt might or not have been made to exclude the child once more from the bedside of her sick father I cannot say, for it was never put to the proof. Mr. Charlton went on apparently regaining health and strength for some months. The winter and the spring passed away without any event; Mrs. Charlton was all kindness and tenderness to her husband, and Louisa was giving way to

the full hope of seeing his dark presentiments remain long unrealized. About the month of June, news reached the village that the Earl of Mallington had been taken very ill in London, and three days after came the intelligence that he was dead; but what horrified the attorney in the first instance, and also puzzled both the servants on the estate, and the gossips of the place was, that he had died without a will, so that all his estates would go to the next male heir. Who was the next male heir then became the question; but the only house in Mallington which possessed a peerage was Mr. Charlton's. The solicitor begged leave to borrow it for a day, even Dr. Western looked into it, and Mr. Charlton himself examined it, with some curiosity, to know who was to be their new neighbor. It afforded little satisfaction, however, for it there appeared that the late lord had no brothers or uncles living; and in tracing back the ancestry, the lawyer declared that the nearest male heir was the Rev. Mr. Wilmot, a gentleman born about sixty years before, who was particularly marked as having no issue. "And yet," he added, "it would bear a question between him and the heirs of his uncle, Thomas Wilmot, of the Grange, if he had any."

He seemed to derive satisfaction from this view of the case, but more especially from the probability of there being great difficulty in settling the claims to the personal property, as the late lord had made no will.

Whether Mr. Charlton had, or had not made a will, or whether he intended to alter one he had made, or to make a new one, this fact seemed to occupy much of his thoughts; and during three days he visited the solicitor's office every morning. It was remarked that he grew more grave about this time; and, as if to dissipate unpleasant imaginations, he made several little excursions, sometimes for a day, sometimes for two or three. Thus passed June, July, and part of August; but towards the close of the latter month Mrs. Charlton ventured to have a few friends to dinner. The ladies had not long left the table, when a loud ringing of the dining-room bell startled the servants in the hall. When the butler ran in, and the footman followed, they found one gentleman supporting Mr. Charlton in his chair, while Dr. Western untied his neck-cloth. Mr. Nethersole was instantly sent for, and came with all despatch; but Mr. Charlton was quite insensible, and when the surgeon attempted to open a vein, no blood followed the lancet. He was a bold and skillful man, however, and he instantly cut the artery of the temple. Some relief appeared to be afforded, and the sick man was removed to bed. The visitors, with the exception of Dr. Western, withdrew, and he waited for the office which he saw he might soon be called upon to perform; to console a daughter for the loss of her father. The moment was nearer than he thought, for in about an hour after Mr. Charlton had been removed to his own chamber, Mr. Nethersole came forth, leading Louisa in tears to the drawing-room. Dr. Western questioned him with his eyes; the surgeon gravely nodded his head and returned to Mrs. Charlton, who had remained in the chamber of death.

The solemn quiet of a great change fell upon the whole house. About eleven Dr. Western took leave of his fair young companion, and she retired to weep in her own chamber. Mrs. Charlton had already disappeared, and the servants, with the exception of one watcher, soon after went to bed. All was still—all was dark—but about three o'clock a faint light was seen in the library by the man who drove the mail cart from the neighboring town.

All the usual proceedings on such an occurrence were gone through with due solemnity, and the lawyer having given notice to Mrs. Charlton, on the day subsequent to Mr. Charlton's death, that he possessed a signed and attested copy of her late husband's will, by which Dr. Western was appointed one of the executors, that lady instantly sent to the worthy clergyman, begging that he would take the whole arrangements on himself, as she was totally unfit for the task. She requested him also to take possession of her husband's keys, and especially those of the library, in which he kept all his principal papers. Dr. Western did as she desired, and, in due time the will in the hands of the attorney was opened, by which it was found that Mr. Charlton had raised the income previously secured to Mrs. Charlton, to one thousand per annum; and then after a few legacies to his old servants, and marks of kindness to his friends, had left the whole of his property, with the reversion of the principal sum from which his widow received her annuity, to his daughter, making it an absolute condition, however, that she should not marry Alfred Latimer.

Mrs. Charlton declared herself perfectly satisfied, and having left the room with her step-daughter, the two executors, of whom the late partner of Mr. Charlton was one, together with the attorney and one of his clerks, proceeded to examine the papers of the deceased. In the strong box amongst the first things that they found was the duplicate of the will; but what was their surprise when, on opening it, a paper headed "codicil" dropped out. By it Mr. Charlton confirmed his former will; but, premising that heiresses of considerable property were too often the dupes of sharpers, he went on to make it a condition that his daughter should obtain the consent of Mrs. Charlton to her marriage whenever that event took place; and that if she proceeded to contract matrimony without the said consent, he revoked all bequests in her favor, and transferred the whole of his estate to his widow. The codicil was not witnessed, but it was dated and signed; and the lawyer, after examining it attentively, and comparing it with some memorandum books in Mr. Charlton's own handwriting, pronounced it good in law.

Here ends that introductory history which it was necessary to relate for the better understanding of what is to follow; and henceforth I shall content myself with the depiction of scenes rather than pursue a continuous narrative.

CHAPTER V.

A YEAR passed, or very nearly a year, when on one bright summer evening, about seven

o'clock, the coach—the only coach that passed through Mallington—appeared, as usual, at the top of the hill. There seemed no particular load upon the vehicle: two countrymen going from some village not far off being the only tenants of the roof; the inside being vacant, and one gentleman seated by the coachman on the box. The luggage was as scanty as the passengers were few, and the tarpauling stretched over one or two scattered trunks and hampers looked like the skin of an Alderney cow, so picturesquely irregular was the substratum it covered. The coachman, as may be easily conceived, was not very well pleased with his cargo, and looked for but a scanty supply of shillings and pence as his share of the spoil. Nor had the demeanor of his companion on the box by any means tended to lighten his spirits, or make him better pleased with his situation. He had found him in position, when he himself assumed the ribands at the half-way house from London, some five or six and twenty miles off, and from that moment till their arrival at the top of Mallington-hill, not more than ten words had passed between them. In vain had the coachman commended the beauty of the day; in vain had he pointed out the snug little box of a retired citizen, and informed his companion that Mr. Jones had the reputation of being a "terrible screw," not having his carriage and horses out above once in a quarter; in vain did he make sundry other attempts to promote the sweet intercourse of pleasant words: the traveler was unresponsive, or, if he did reply, it seemed but with the intention of proving that he was not altogether deprived of the power of speech, by uttering a mere monosyllable or dissyllable, such as "Yes," "No," "Very," "Indeed." When the guard had put on the skid, however, at the top of Mallington-hill, the coachman was astounded as he turned round his head and raised his left hand with a slight shake of the reins, to hear his companion's voice pronouncing a whole uninterrupted sentence.

"Pray what village is this, coachman?" he said, gazing down the hill, apparently well pleased.

The coachman actually started at the sound, for though he was a strong man, he was not exempt from human infirmities.

"This is Mallington, sir," he said, and then he felt a strong inclination to punish his co-occupant of the box for his long taciturnity, by relapsing into silence, but his natural loquacity required vent, and he proceeded to inform the stranger that the great house on the right was old Mr. Charlton's as was.

"Has he changed his name?" demanded the other.

"Oh, dear, no, sir," replied the coachman, "he's got no name at all now, for he's dead. A very good gentleman he was, too, and wore a pigtail."

"And who does the house belong to now?" demanded the stranger.

"Why, to his daughter," replied the Jehu, "some say; some say to her step-mother, the widow; howsoever, the young lady is a great heiress, that's clear, and has as much as six or seven thousand a year of her own."

Were loquacity communicated by the same

means as hydrophobia, one might have supposed that the coachman had bitten his companion, for he now asked all manner of questions as they went down the hill; inquired the name of the occupant of every house that they passed at all bigger than a pigsty, and willingly instigated the gentleman of the road to give him all the little anecdotes and detailed descriptions he could furnish of the dwellers in Mallington and its neighborhood.

As they reached the bottom of the hill, and could just see the sign of the Bagpipes, which, as the reader knows, stood a little back from the highway, the coachman informed his companion that they stopped there twenty minutes to tea; for those were days when there was such a thing occasionally as leisure in life, even on the highway, and people did not think that the only object in traveling was to be propelled at the greatest possible speed that human nature can endure from one point of the earth's surface to the other. Men were allowed to eat and drink upon the road, to look about them, and sometimes to think. I record it only as a fact in history, for soon it will be forgotten; but certain it is that in the days I speak of the fastest rate of progression was ten miles an hour; and sometimes twenty minutes, or even half an hour was allowed, according to the appetite of the guard and the favor of the inn, for taking refreshment at various times in the day. To the astonishment, and somewhat to the consternation of the coachman, for he had himself nearly twenty miles to go, the stranger replied that he was booked for Mallington, and should alight at the Bagpipes; and the worthy lord of the reins turned himself a little on his seat, to mark better than he had hitherto marked the appearance of the person who was to get down at Mallington; for the dropping of a visitor in that village was an event that rarely if ever happened, except in one of two cases: namely, when the descendants—I think I may use that word—were of the class bumpkin, or when they were inhabitants of the town or neighborhood well known to the driver of the old heavy Blue. Once, indeed, he had brought down a whole inside full of sickly children; and a number of stray hooping coughs and single measles had traveled with him. One or two consumptions and a black jaundice had likewise been his companions; but these were the only people who, as he expressed it, had visited Mallington for pleasure, except Mr. Fothergill, one of the executors of Mr. Charlton, who had come down thither on his friend's death.

Nothing could be more accurate than the young gentleman's whole appearance. He was dressed in black, with a narrow band of crape round his hat, which showed, as the coachman internally observed, that he was in mourning for somebody. Then he had a black handkerchief—not a stock—round his neck, which proved he was not a clergyman, for clergymen did not wear black handkerchiefs in those days; and then he had black gloves, fitting neatly to his hand, which proved he was not an undertaker, for the gloves of undertakers are always too long in the fingers; and then, again, he had a very good hat, glossy in spite of dust and journey, and very well polished boots, which

went far to prove that he was a gentleman. He was not what would be generally called a very handsome man, for coloring, which is what first strikes the eye, was wanting. His countenance had not the slightest resemblance to any face that ever was painted on a sign-post. His complexion was dark, with hair, eyes, and whiskers nearly black, and the eyebrows strongly marked. His forehead was both wide and high, rising straight from the brow, and surrounded by wavy curls; his nose was straight, with a somewhat wide nostril, and his mouth was beautifully cut, though somewhat stern, while the chin was rather prominent, but well rounded. Though he could not be called exactly pale, yet he had little color; but his lips were red and healthy, and his eye clear and bright. In height he might be a little above five foot ten, broad in the chest and shoulders, thin in the flank, and long in the limbs, and in age, perhaps, six or seven and twenty.

All these particulars were gathered by the rapid eye of the coachman before he pulled up at the door of the inn; and he had concluded, from his survey, that "the gentleman" was quite a gentleman notwithstanding," when the object of his examination got down from the box, and confirmed the judgment internally pronounced upon him by giving coachman and guard each half-a-crown, when the usual fee for "an outside" was rarely eighteen-pence.

"Those two portmanteaus," he said, pointing to the roof, as he stood before the inn-door; and with great alacrity they were handed off; and with greater alacrity received by the porter of the house as indications of a visitor. He put them down, however, before the house, and in a quiet common-place way looked at all the five sides that were visible, as if it were a matter of course, to ascertain the gentleman's address; but there was no ticket to be seen, nor brass-plate either, and remarking that the proprietor of the portmanteaus remained looking about him, the porter stepped up to him and touched his own hair—that he had not—saying, "Any more luggage, sir?"

"An umbrella in the inside," replied the stranger; and after having turned the portmanteaus on their other ends, for the convenience of carrying them, and of looking for the name; and having taken them into the passage disappointed, the porter came forth again, and searched the coach for the umbrella. He found one with an ivory handle; and, to his great satisfaction, for he was just going to give up the inquiry in despair, he found two capital letters engraved upon the ivory. Those capital letters were E. M.; and although, of course, there was no possible concatenation of vowels and consonants within the vocabulary of proper and christian names, by which those initials might not have been followed, so that the field of conjecture was somewhat large, yet, as I have said, the porter was delighted to have discovered even so much, as he well knew that his importance in the village would be increased in proportion. Before making this important discovery, he had not ventured to intrude upon his mistress, who was taking tea in her own parlor with Mr. Stubbs, the newly-established linendraper, and paying little attention to the heavy Blue, which rarely brought any visitors

to her inn; but he now put his head into the parlor, saying, "Gentleman, ma'am—going to stop—had his boxes down—looking about him—quite a gentleman—E. M. on his umbrella!"

As a spider in the corner of its cunning net, whenever it feels by the vibration of the fine filaments that a fly is struggling in the toils, rushes forth like lightning to secure the prey, so rushed forth Mrs. Pluckrose, the widowed mistress of the Bagpipes, to seize upon the traveler at the first indication of her porter. The thoughts of the Misses Martin, of Mrs. Dixon, of Mr. Crump, and of half a dozen other lodging-house-keepers, came flashing before her imagination, and she saw, in fancy, the traveler ravished from her at her very door, if she did not make haste. The moment she beheld the young gentleman in black, she conceived a high esteem for him, and a desire to cultivate his acquaintance. But there he stood, all unconscious of the tender agitation he was producing, looking up the street towards poor Mr. Charlton's house, or down towards the park of the late Earl of Mallington, or along the river towards the church and the rectory. Mrs. Pluckrose got on a line with him and made a curtsy; but he took not the slightest notice of her, for his eyes had just turned to the other side, and she might have been an elephant for aught he knew. She was a little abashed, but just at that moment she beheld the figure of Mr. Crump coming across, with a sauntering air, as if to see whether the coach had brought anything for him. She knew that no time was to be lost, and moving round directly in front, where it was impossible not to see her, for she was of no inconsiderable width, she dropped another curtsy, saying, "If you are going to stay in Mallington, sir, I hope I shall have the honor of entertaining you."

The gentleman looked at her and nodded his head good-humoredly, replying, "I shall stay a few days, madam, and shall remain at the inn, if it is yours."

There was a little compliment implied in the latter part of this answer, and though it was more in the manner than in the words, and Mrs. Pluckrose was an Englishwoman, yet she took it, and dropped another curtsy.

"We have two nice rooms, sir," she said, "one looking down the river, the other up the village; and I am sure we can make you quite comfortable."

"I doubt it not in the least, madam," replied the stranger. "I am very easily made comfortable; but that which would tend to do so most at the present moment would be some dinner."

"It shall be ready in one minute, sir," answered Mrs. Pluckrose; and then, seeing Mr. Crump rapidly approaching, she added, in terror lest her triumph should be snatched from her hands, "Will you not walk in, sir, and look at the rooms?"

Before the stranger could reply, inexorable Mr. Crump was upon him with a card in his hand. "Allow me to hand you that, sir," said Mr. Crump, "in case you should need lodgings."

"No; I shall not need any," replied the gentleman, after having looked at the card, and at the same time holding it out to Mr. Crump again.

"Pray, keep it, sir," rejoined Mr. Crump, "one can never tell."

"'Pon my life, this is too bad!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluckrose.

But the stranger settled the matter for her, replying, "I would rather not keep it, sir. I do not want lodgings, and am not fond of dirty pieces of pasteboard."

Mrs. Pluckrose tittered in an ecstasy of delight, the porter grinned; but Mr. Crump, with an air of offended dignity, replied, "Oh! no offence, sir, I hope. I only meant—"

"There, that will do, my good man," answered the young gentleman. "I am not offended. Good evening. Now, madam, I will see the rooms," and following the triumphant Mrs. Pluckrose, he walked into the inn.

CHAPTER VI.

THE stranger was shown to his rooms; they were clean, tidy, and comfortable. The little bed-room, with its white boards and white dimity, looking up the village street towards the top of the hill, and catching a glance of the green fields at the back of Mallington, over the tops of some low houses; and the sitting-room looking down upon the calm, picturesque stream, beyond which appeared the park with its thick trees, and the several habitations of gardeners and gamekeeper dotting the edge of the woodland. The stranger gazed forth with much pleasure; he seemed to take great delight in the beauties of nature, for his eyes wandered up the stream and down the stream, and over the large rounds of oak and elm with an expression of satisfaction which had something almost melancholy in its very intensity.

At length Mrs. Pluckrose, who stood behind him, waiting till he had contented himself, heard him exclaim, "How refreshing!" and she immediately concluded that he was some gentleman from the city. He was too good-looking, and too well-dressed, she thought, for a merchant's clerk; but most likely he was a young merchant who had over-worked himself in his counting-house, and had come down to Mallington for a little fresh air.

When she had settled that point quite to her heart's content, she spoke to him of his dinner, asking much in the terms of the schoolboy jest, "Will you have it now, sir?" She did not add, indeed, "or wait till you can get it," whatever she or the stranger might think.

"Why, my good lady," replied her guest, "I thought that by this time it was well nigh cooked; but it does not matter. I dare say you have some cold meat in the house, and that will do very well."

"As beautiful a sirloin, sir, as ever you put a knife into," answered Mrs. Pluckrose.

"Well, that will do excellently," replied the stranger; and putting his hand upon the landlady's arm he added, with a gayer look than he had yet borne, "now I will answer all your questions before they are asked. I will not take any vegetables with it. I will not wait till you just get a potato hot. I do not take any pickles; nor any tart; nor any cheese. I am, in short, my good lady, anxious to get out to take a walk this beautiful evening in this beautiful country; and therefore would dine as soon as possible."

Another day your cook shall display her powers in all manner of ways, if she pleases; but at present expedition is the thing required. Moreover, I like the place and the rooms so well, my good lady, that I shall certainly remain for a week, so that there will be plenty of time for cook to show herself skillful."

Mrs. Pluckrose accordingly left him very well satisfied, ordered the cold beef up to the gentleman at once; and going into the room where the coachman was taking his tea, declared that he had brought her a very nice, gay gentleman indeed.

"Gay!" cried the coachman; "why, he did not speak a word all along the road till he got to the top of the hill."

"More's the pity, Master Giles," replied the widow, "for he talks very well when he does set about it, I can tell you. He's quite a gentleman, too. Let's look at your bill, Giles, there's a good creature."

The coachman put his hand into his breast pocket, and drew forth a greasy pocket book, in the heart of which was his waybill; but Mrs. Pluckrose scrutinized it in vain for the stranger's name, and while she was in the act the maid who performed the part of waiter came running in for a bottle of sherry.

If the guest drank it all, it must have been out of tumblers, for he had not time to pour out eleven wine glassfuls before his step was heard upon the stairs; and the next moment he walked along the passage to the door."

"I hope the beef was tender, sir," said Mrs. Pluckrose, putting out her head.

"As a maiden's sigh," replied her guest, with a smile, and out he went.

There was a row of cropped lime trees before the door of the inn, each as round as a counsellor's wig, and tolerably well powdered with dust. The space between the house and them was about ten yards, and as soon as he reached them the stranger turned and looked up at the board over the inn door, studying the landlady's name, for he wished to be able to vary the term "good lady," which was the only appellation which he had hitherto been able to bestow upon her. She herself had been watching him from her parlor window, not without some remaining fears in regard to the syren influence of Crumpe and Martins; but, to her great satisfaction, she saw him, instead of walking up the street, take his way down towards the stream, and then turn up the neat broad elm-shaded road that led to the church and the rectory.

Soon disappearing from the sight of Mrs. Pluckrose, the stranger pursued his way at an easy pace, and looked up for an instant at the pretty little village church, about which there were some good old bits of Norman doors and buttresses, and then turned an inquiring eye upon the rectory.

"Yes," he said, after pausing for a moment, "it must be so. There is no other house near. At all events I will see;" and, opening the neat gate, he walked along the neat carriage-road bordered with evergreens up to the porch, covered with ivy and China roses, and rang the bell.

An old whiteheaded man servant appeared without making him wait, and the stranger in-

quired "Am I wrong in supposing this the rectory?"

"No, sir," replied the man; "it is the rectory."

"Then is Dr. Western at home?" demanded the stranger.

"Yes, sir," answered the servant, "but—"

"He is at dinner, perhaps," said the visitor.

"Oh, dear no, sir," was the answer, with a smile, he has dined these three hours; he is at tea."

"Well, then, my good friend," rejoined the stranger, "will you let him know, with an apology for interrupting him by so late a visit, that I wish much for a few moments' conversation with him."

"Will you step into this room, sir," said the man, and he ushered the visitor into the doctor's library.

The clergyman finished the cup of the infusion of the Chinese herb which had been poured out for him, and then, leaving his sister with a young lady who was taking tea with them, he walked with a slow step to the study, where, opening the door, he regarded the stranger with his calm and thoughtful eyes—not long enough to make the glance unpleasant, but sufficiently long to afford the worthy doctor those physiological indications which he was fond of obtaining in regard to every new being of the same species as himself with whom he came in contact. The result was in this instance highly satisfactory to him.

"That is a fine countenance," he said internally, "thoughtful and yet frank."

"You wished to see me, sir, I think," he proceeded aloud, "pray be seated," and he himself took his accustomed arm-chair, leaning back in it, but bending forward his head in an attitude of polite attention.

"I have the honor, Dr. Western," replied the stranger, "of bringing you this letter from Sir Henry Scarsdale, who was once, I think, a pupil of yours at Oxford. If you will read it, you will see that I have some business to speak with you upon."

"Delighted to hear from my young friend," replied the old gentleman, his face lighting up; "he was always a great favorite of mine; and any friend of his must be always —"

As he had spoken, he had torn open the letter, and was going on reading it; but something that he saw therein made him stop suddenly in his speech, and fix his whole attention upon the contents. The letter was somewhat long; and the doctor said nothing more till he had got to the end, except such words as "certainly"—"with the greatest pleasure"—"indeed!" but when he had concluded the perusal, he rose, held out his hand to the stranger, and said, "I am delighted to see you, sir. If you will do me the honor of taking up your abode at my poor house, it will give me great pleasure, and any assistance I can afford is, of course, yours to command in any way."

"I feel very much obliged to you, my dear sir," replied the guest, "and obliged to Scarsdale for procuring me the pleasure of an introduction to you; but I think it will be best to retain my quarters at your little inn here, where I have two comfortable rooms enough, and the landlady seems a good woman."

"Oh! an excellent creature!" replied the clergyman. "Were you sick, you would find what a kind motherly being she is."

"Now, my dear sir, I will not detain you longer," said the stranger, "you are at tea, I know."

"May I not ask you to join my little party?" said the clergyman; "there are but my sister and a very sweet young lady, whom we love almost as a child—the cynosure of neighboring eyes, indeed—Miss Charlton."

"What, the fair lady of the house upon the hill?" asked the visitor.

The good doctor answered in the affirmative, adding, "My ward, though she will soon escape from tutelage."

The stranger willingly accepted the rector's invitation, and Dr. Western rose to show him the way, but paused at the door, and turning with a smile to his new acquaintance, said, "I had forgotten to ask the name."

"Oh! Edmond Morton," replied the young gentleman, and the clergyman loading the way, they were soon in the drawing-room, where Mr. Morton was introduced first to Dr. Western's sister, Mrs. Evelyn, and next to Miss Charlton. Louisa had now expanded into the beauty of womanhood, but yet it was that of young maturity. The flower was no longer in the bud, but it was not full blown. She had inherited not only all her mother's features, but her mother's grace; the grace of high lineage, as well as a fine mind and lovely person; and though her dress was very simple, and still mourning, yet there was that look of birth and dignity about her, that calm repose, which may be occasionally found in all classes, but which wherever found speaks one character of heart and spirit. The rich waving brown hair fell without art into the forms that sculpture has loved to give it, and in the whole cutting of the features the eye of Edmond Morton, and he was no mean judge, could discover scarcely one flaw. If there was anything, perhaps, it was a want of animation that struck him at first as a defect; but yet there was a depth in those soft and somewhat sad eyes, which made him think that the whole face might become full of expression when the bosom was moved by any powerful emotion. However, he had seen many a very lovely girl before that, and was not very easily to be captivated. His was too gentlemanly a spirit, also, to examine the person of a lady as he would have criticised a horse; and thus he was neither so much struck with Louisa's appearance at first as many might have been; nor did he remark all the beauty of her form and face till he had been some time in her company.

On her part, Louisa paid little attention to his appearance. He was a friend of Dr. Western's, and that was enough to gain her favorable consideration. She thought him a very good-looking young man also; and, perhaps, drew some comparisons between the tone and carriage of the stranger and those of the good folks of the neighborhood, rather to the disadvantage of the latter, but it went no further. She thought not of flirting with him, or attracting his attention, and for some time, while he sat talking with Mrs. Evelyn, entering at once, with a peculiar sort of *aisance*, into the position of a friend

rather than a new acquaintance, Louisa remained silent, or only said a few words to Dr. Western. The good rector, however, was not pleased with her reserve: he was, to say sooth, somewhat proud of his fair ward; he thought her, in his heart, the loveliest and the best of girls, and his very indignation at Mrs. Charlton, for differing greatly with him on that point, made him anxious to have all the rest of the world upon his side. He was determined, therefore, that he would draw her out; and though Louisa was, indeed, somewhat sad that evening, from various unpleasant things which had occurred in her own house, yet, Dr. Western, who well knew how, soon won her to a gay smile, and then to a laugh. He changed the subject then, and spoke of his parish and his poor, and dwelt upon one or two of those scenes of distress which every clergyman who does his duty must witness, without being able to alleviate, or, at least, not much: the dying mother—the reprobate son—the broken-hearted parents—the anguish of remorse; and as he went on, to Edmond Morton's surprise, that calm and placid countenance which he had thought insinuate, showed that it could express with intense feeling every different emotion of the mind. She forgot herself, too, entirely; conversed eagerly and well on every topic that was brought before her, and poured forth the pure high feelings of a noble and generous heart in sympathy for sorrow or for joy. Towards Morton himself, too, her reserve died away, and finding in him stores of thought and information, such as few possessed around her, joined with a grace and ease of demeanor which can only be gained by long and intimate communication with the noble and the high, she gave herself up to a new charm, and almost forget the passing hours till the change of light warned her that day was coming to a close. Then, starting up, with a smile, she said, "I must away, dear Mrs. Evelyn, or I shall be scolded by my mother for wandering so late."

"Nay, but my song, Louisa—my song," cried Dr. Western.

"Oh, it must be for another night," replied Miss Charlton; "see, it is really growing dark."

"Well, we will walk with you up the village," said the rector, "if Mr. Morton has no objection; and as we return I will give him a full, true, and particular account of all the villagers whose houses we pass, that he may learn to esteem the inhabitants of Mallington properly."

"Oh! pray do not," replied Louisa; "you are so severe upon us, dear friend, that I fear if you give him your view of our faults and failings, he will run away from the place to-morrow morning."

"Nay, I will be just, my dear," answered Dr. Western; and as soon as Louisa's shawl and bonnet were adjusted, they set out upon their way.

CHAPTER VII.

THE rector of Mallington gave his left arm to Louisa Charlton, and Mr. Morton walked on the other side of that fair lady; a shade had come over her face, as they passed close to the

churchyard, and as the low cold dwellings of its silent tenants met her sight. It was not exactly the shade of grief, indeed, but of calm, serious thought. The conversation of her new acquaintance had been of many things—various, rich, fanciful, amusing; and, though she did not know or perceive it, the deep current that lay beneath the sparkling surface had tended to promote reflection, even while it seemed only to excite the imagination. It had, of course, been all of worldly things; but it had led the mind by a natural and quiet course to find the latent relations between those very worldly things and the higher, the more spiritual, with which they all have some mysterious connection. Thus it was that, though wifenever Louisa Charlton passed within sight of her father's tomb a melancholy feeling of regret would steal over her, her thoughts were now more grave and solemn than they had been for long on a similar occasion, and that she felt, with less buoyancy than youth is apt to know, how short a space, how speedy a close, how unprofitable a career, have all the joys and pleasures of existence.

Dr. Western remarked the shadow, but he took no notice, and their young companion saw it also, but remained silent; so that they had reached the end of the village street and were beginning to walk slowly up the hill before either of the three spoke.

"Had we not better go by the field-path?" said Louisa Charlton, turning to her guardian; "it is so much more beautiful and so much quieter."

"No, my dear child," answered the old gentleman; "that would be hardly fair," and he smiled as he spoke.

Louisa looked in his face with an inquiring glance; and Edmond Morton went further, asking, "How do you mean—not fair, my dear sir?"

"Because I think it would almost amount to robbery," replied the good doctor, "to deprive the people of my parish of the high delight they will experience in seeing you and Miss Charlton and myself walking up the village together as familiarly as if you had been living here for ten years. You cannot imagine, sir, what a source of innocent delight this walk of ours will afford to some hundred of people in Mallington; what an inexhaustible fund of conversation it will supply to persons who have nothing else on earth to talk about; what a diversion it will effect, as you soldiers call it, in favor of poor Mrs. Pilkin, who took a Sunday walk the other day with a gay bachelor, whose banners with her fair self I have to publish for the first time on Sunday next—but the people know nothing of that,—and how you and I and Louisa, without our own consciousness or any effort on our part but merely that of walking up this hill instead of going by the fields, will enliven every tea-table this night, will afford zest and interest to the cold chicken and slice of ham, even if we do not make Miss Martin revoke or Mr. Crump misdeal."

Both Louisa and Mr. Morton smiled, and the latter inquired, "Is it really such a gossiping little place?"

"Just in proportion to its idleness," answered Dr. Western, in a graver tone; "as, indeed, is always the case. Being a place of no trade,

and, I might almost say, no society, the people for one-half of their time have nothing to do but comment on their neighbors. The residence of half-a-dozen respectable families in or near the village would speedily work a great change in these respects; for idleness is the parent of gossip, as well as of most minor vices, and of many great ones also; but here the poor people have positively nothing else to do, and their eyes and their tongues, aided each in turn by imagination, are alternately busy with their neighbors' affairs all day long. See, Louisa," he continued, "they are all out at their doors already, as if with a sort of presentiment they would have something to talk about; and now don't you see there is Mrs. Molineux, who keeps the pie-shop, has gone in to Mrs. Stubbs, the plumber and glazier's wife, to tell her the fact that you and I and the strange gentleman who came by the coach are walking up the village together." Then, sinking his voice to a whisper, he added in Miss Charlton's ear, "You are given away already, Louisa—the whole matter is settled and done in the opinion of the gossips of Mallington."

Louisa laughed and colored a little—very little indeed—but just sufficiently to show that she understood what the good rector meant, and felt that it was a thing not quite impossible that she should marry such a man as he who was then walking beside her. That skittish jade, imagination, which will go galloping hither and thither whether the rider likes it or not, instantly set off with poor Louisa Charlton, and would have fain carried her up to the point of considering whether Edmond Morton was or was not the sort of man that she might have liked in the capacity of a husband. He was handsome, intelligent, gentlemanly, and totally unlike all the people of Mallington—a great advantage in the eyes of Louisa Charlton. He was very unlike, also, Alfred Latimer, which was a still greater advantage; but then, when she had got thus far on the road along which fancy was hurrying her, she recollected that she had not known her companion for more than two hours, and, getting quietly down off her nag, knowing well that if she went on riding she should have no command over her own course, she led imagination back by the bridle, and shut the stable door.

As they proceeded on their way Dr. Western, according to promise, expounded to Edmond Morton the character, situation, and peculiarities of the various inhabitants of Mallington, whose dwellings they passed, and he did it very pleasantly—never uncharitably, nor bitterly, though often a little satirically. The doctor, the solicitor, the retired naval commander, the old maids and their opponent, the new shopkeeper and his pretensions—from a humble and retiring widow woman of very limited income, who lived in the last house at the bottom of the hill, to the little fat bustling demagogue of a retired London tradesman, who had brought down drab gaiters and democracy, the spirit of opposition to everything, and an utter contempt for the aspirate, to the new sphere of Mallington—were all passed in review by the worthy doctor with so much more detail than Louisa had ever heard him use before, that she could not help thinking that the rector must have some particu-

blar desire to give Mr. Morton a full and comprehensive knowledge of his parish and its parishioners.

As they walked up the hill but, slowly, they were passed at a quick pace by Mrs. Charlton's maid, Mistress Windsor, who was still in as great favor with her lady as ever, and elevated to the rank of housekeeper; and, to use a vulgar expression, had both feathered her nest and tricked out her plumage handsomely during the three or four last years of Mr. Charlton's life. Though not so young as when first she was introduced to the reader, and bearing certain traces of it in wrinkle and line, she was still a very active woman, and had lost no portion of her shrewdness. She was as keen as her mistress: even, perhaps, a little keener, and she had always made it a point of showing herself especially respectful towards Miss Charlton both before and after her master's death. It had been her common observation that nobody could tell what might happen. Now this was not a maxim of particular application, but a wide, broad, philosophical axiom, which was the basis of one-half of her conclusions; and when Mr. Charlton first fell ill she redoubled her attention to Louisa, saying to herself, "No one can tell what may happen." When Mr. Charlton died, she was still more attentive, repeating "No one can tell what may happen;" and when she heard the will read, and found that the deceased had left the great bulk of his property, except the annuity to his widow, to the young lady, Mrs. Windsor was satisfied with her own conduct; and, although she did think it strange that Mr. Charlton should have so strictly tied his daughter's hands in regard to her marriage, she still determined to show herself devoted to Louisa, observing once more "No one can tell what may happen." She had, indeed, taken care at the same time to give no just cause of offence to fair Mrs. Charlton, but was quite as ready at all times to do everything she could to forward that lady's views as she had been from the first. Mrs. Charlton, indeed, saw through her—yes, through and through her, reader. She was not merely diaphanous, but quite transparent to the eyes of Mrs. Charlton; and yet that worthy lady was not at all inclined to let Mrs. Windsor see that she bore any ill will towards her for courting Louisa, even if she did feel annoyed at it, which I do not pretend to say she did not. Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Windsor had known each other for many years. Mrs. Windsor had served Mrs. Charlton very well and very faithfully, as has been shown; and Mrs. Charlton had every inclination to pass over any little faults, but not from gratitude; for if Mrs. Charlton could have strangled Mrs. Windsor with her own hands, and nothing more said about it, who could tell if she would not have done it?

As the respectable abigail now passed by Dr. Western and Louisa, she paused, half turned round, and dropped a low curtsy, then resumed her quick pace again, and reached the house some time before them. As soon as she had entered the doors, instead of betaking herself to the housekeeper's room, as she usually did in ordinary circumstances, she inquired of one of the footmen whether her mistress was alone in the drawing-room; and finding that such was the

case, she walked straight up thither, without taking off bonnet or shawl.

"What is it, Windsor?" demanded the lady as soon as she appeared, speaking in a querulous tone, and putting a pen with which she had been writing into the inkstand.

"Why, ma'am, I thought I would just tell you that Miss Charlton is coming back," replied Mrs. Windsor.

"Well, I suppose she is," answered her mistress, still crossly; "it is time she should, for it is getting quite dark, I can hardly see to write."

"Yes, ma'am," rejoined the housekeeper; "but there is a gentleman with her as well as Dr. Western, and I thought you might like to know."

"A gentleman!" said Mrs. Charlton, with a greater degree of interest; "what sort of a gentleman, Windsor?"

"You can see him, ma'am, from the window," replied Mrs. Windsor: "he's a fine looking young man, who came down by the coach to-night, I heard, and has put up at the inn; and he took the two rooms there for a fortnight, and then went to Dr. Western's direct."

By this time Mrs. Charlton reached a western window which looked down the hill, and was gazing steadfastly upon the group which was slowly walking up. The remaining light fell full upon them, and she could see them pause, and look round over the scene below, and the high old trees of the park on the opposite side of the valley, and the sunset glow of the sky above; and she remarked that the stranger pointed with his hand, and seemed to make some inquiry, and that when they came forward again Louisa's fair face was raised towards him with a bright warm smile upon her lips.

Mrs. Charlton smiled too; but it was not with a very pleasant, though with a pleased expression. It seemed as if she said to herself, "That will do," but yet as if that which was to be done was not very full of human charities. "Go down, Windsor," she said, "and tell Edward when Dr. Western comes to beg him to walk in, for I wish to speak with him, and the young gentleman who is with him, of course. And hark ye, Windsor, I wish you would find out who he is, and all about him; for, of course, I am very willing to show attention to any one who visits Mallington, and yet, of course, I must be careful of whom I bring into Miss Charlton's company; but, of course, I must wish Mr. Latimer to have some more and some better society than he finds here; and of course—but run down, Windsor, and tell Edward what I have said, for they are coming near."

Mrs. Windsor hurried away with a grave face to do as she was bid, but her grave face only lasted to the back of the door, and then she murmured to herself, "as if I did not know!"

The footman received his instructions in terms that he was well disciplined to understand, and the next minute the great bell rang. He walked with slow and stately step to the door, and having opened it drew back to let Miss Charlton pass, but as she shook hands with Dr. Western, and wished the stranger good night, the man stepped forward again and said, "My mistress, sir, told me to say if you came, that

she wished to speak with you for one moment, if you would have the kindness to walk up."

"I will wait for you here, my dear sir," said Mr. Morton; but Louisa, with color slightly rising in her cheek—for she did not always know how her fair step-mother would view her proceedings—interposed and exclaimed, "Oh, no; pray come in, Mr. Morton; Mrs. Charlton will be very happy to see you, I am sure."

"Perhaps"—replied the visitor, but before he could conclude his sentence the rector kindly laid his hand on his arm, saying, "Nay, come in, my young friend; if Mrs. Charlton has any matter of business to speak of, we can find another room in this house. It is not like my little rectory, and there are plenty of council chambers."

Edmond Morton could only bow, and follow whither the doctor and Louisa led; and in a moment after he was formally introduced to Mrs. Charlton. The fair widow was all smiles and graciousness, though, to say sooth, some part of her youthful grace had fled, for she had become rather fuller in her proportions than was altogether consistent with exact symmetry. As she was not a very tall woman, the difference of the breadth in relation to the length, as compared with what she had been, when she changed from Latimer to Charlton, was not to her advantage—in personal appearance, at least—and yet she was a very pretty woman, *très bien conservée*, as our French neighbors term it; fair, smooth-skinned, delicate featured, with nothing that could indicate a year more than forty, or anything else than the sweetest possible disposition, the most placable and considerate mind. She was delighted to see Dr. Western; she was charmed to receive Mr. Morton; she was tenderly affectionate to dear Louisa. She was the pink of step-mothers, and, the pleasantest of friends. All that she had to say to the rector was that she had for the time given up her intention of going to Cheltenham, in consequence of letters that she had received that morning; and although Dr. Western had never heard of her purpose, he expressed himself very well satisfied that she had abandoned it, saying that he was not fond of Cheltenham, especially in what is termed the season; he thought it a bad place for young men, and a worse place for young women.

Mrs. Charlton smiled sweetly, and accused him of being too severe in his notions; and then, turning to Mr. Morton, she inquired if he did not admire their quiet little rustic village, so beautifully situated amongst its woods and fields.

"I have really seen very little of it as yet, madam," replied the young gentleman, "having been here but a few hours; but as I am a great lover of the beauties of nature, I have no doubt that I shall find enough to admire."

Mrs. Charlton was delighted that he was a lover of the beauties of nature; and declared that they would show him plenty of the sweetest scenery in the world; and appealed to Dr. Western whether they would not. She must positively, she said, make a party to take him to the waterfall up the glen, and insisted that he should not venture to visit it without her presence, and she ended by asking the rector, and his friend, and Mrs. Evelyn to dinner the

next day at an early hour, that they might take a walk before tea.

"Hang it!" thought the worthy clergyman, "the widow is looking for a third husband already." But he did her great injustice. Mrs. Charlton was no longer Mrs. Latimer, and though she always had her objects, they were very different from what they had been, and from what Dr. Western imagined. For himself, he accepted her invitation; but declined for Mrs. Evelyn, who never went out to dinner, as Mrs. Charlton well knew; and Mr. Morton promising to accompany him, the two gentlemen took their leave just as the lady asked Louisa to ring for lights.

"Well, my dear sir, what do you think of my fair neighbor," asked the clergyman, when they were fairly out of the house, "having seen her yourself, you will need no explanation."

"I think not," replied Edmond Morton, dryly. "May I ask, my dear sir, if she is really that sweet girl's mother?"

"You think you see signs of a different race—eh?" said Dr. Western, with a smile. "Very different, indeed, I can assure you. I never saw Louisa's mother; but from all I have heard, she was very like her daughter, both in person and mind. I need not tell you that Mrs. Charlton is not. Nevertheless, she is a very good and respectable woman."

"A very artificial one, I should think," replied Edmond Morton; "should I be wrong, my dear doctor, if I said a very artful one?"

"Nay, nay," cried the rector, "that is a somewhat harsh term. She seems worldly, it must be confessed, and so far I believe you have judged right, though how you have formed your opinion in so short a time I cannot tell. It took me longer to form mine."

"I have been all my life accustomed to observe small traits," replied his companion, "and have seldom found their indications fallacious. I know, indeed, that they may be so used also, that the habit of remarking them begets in us a particular sort of vanity in our own penetration, which makes us unwilling to admit that we are deceived when we really are so. Therefore I never allow myself to act from the impressions first received, till they are confirmed by further observation. Yet I think I cannot be mistaken in my estimate of either of the ladies we have just left."

"And what of Louisa, then?" asked Dr. Western.

"Hardly fair, my dear sir," rejoined his companion; "she is wonderfully beautiful when she is animated. But I should think that she was a flower that required very tender usage; and that she has not had it always."

"Yet she is of a firm and high mind," answered the clergyman eagerly; "I know not any one in whom such gentleness is blended with such a strong sense of what is right."

"I am sure it is," replied Morton; "in truth, my dear doctor, hers is a neighborhood of which one may well be afraid."

"You know she is an heiress, and her fortune very large," said Dr. Western in a peculiar tone.

"I have heard so this evening," replied the young gentleman; "but I once heard a very noble and amiable friend declare that if it rained

bettresses he would go out with an umbrella; and I have always been very much of his way of thinking." The rector laughed, but Mr. Morton, changing the subject, reminded him that he was to give him a sight of some papers; and they both quickened their pace towards the rectory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Misses Martin had discovered all about it; the Misses Martin had settled it all in their own minds—they were mighty minds for settling other people's affairs; but when Mrs. Windsor, on the following morning, walked into their shop, as she called it, "promiscuously," to buy a piece of narrow tape—thinking that if there were in all Mallington any person or persons who could gather the whole particulars of Mr. Morton's history, the Misses Martin must be the people—they proved obdurately silent, notwithstanding every hint and question she could devise. Had she asked no questions, had she given no hints of a wish to discover more of Mr. Morton, the Misses Martin might very possibly—from a desire to hear what that gentleman had been doing at Mallington House—have proved communicative themselves; but as soon as the two ladies perceived that Mrs. Windsor was on the search for information, they resolved not to give it; for there was war between Mrs. Charlton and the Misses Martin—civil war it might, indeed, be called, for it was more real than apparent, and conducted with all politeness. Mrs. Charlton had triumphed over the Misses Martin—she had married the rich widower—she had surrounded herself with wealth and splendor—she had been raised into the first position in the society of the neighborhood, in spite of all the Misses Martins' inuendos and slanders—and she had set up a rival in a shop, which had soon consigned theirs, if not to total decay, to the solitary and solemn declension of faded prints and soiled linens and articles of all kinds, excellent in themselves, but not attractive to the eye. These were things not to be forgotten by the Misses Martin, and, as I have said, they remained obdurately silent, although they had settled the whole affairs of Mr. Edmond Morton an hour or more before Mrs. Windsor appeared.

But Mrs. Windsor was a skillful general, and, by a well-conceived manœuvre, she turned their flank. There was a neighbor of the Misses Martin just three doors off. He was a bookseller and stationer, well to do in the world—an elderly bachelor, a very respectable man. He differed from the church of England in several of his religious notions, and occasionally preached his own doctrines himself to a select congregation; but, nevertheless, he was just the sort of man to be very high in the esteem of the Misses Martin, who, though they belonged to the church of England, had no objection to marry any one—only nobody asked them. But Mr. Sowerby was, as I have said, a bachelor, and he was fond of news; so that Mrs. Windsor, remembering well that the Misses Martin were in the habit, one or the other, of running into Mr. Sowerby's shop eight-and-forty times each day—that is to say once every quarter of an hour while it was open—conceived that ere

the period of her visit they must, by an inevitable necessity, have told that gentleman all that they had gathered of Mr. Morton. The moment, therefore, that the tape was bought and paid for, she turned her steps to Mr. Sowerby's and asked for some note paper. The worthy master of the shop was delighted to see her, and began at once by telling her that it was a pleasant day, but warm, very warm. As Mrs. Windsor had discovered this interesting fact before, she assented without any long consideration, and then went on to say that the night before had been very warm likewise, to which Mr. Sowerby agreed; but then Mrs. Windsor proceeded to relate how warm she had found it as she walked up from the bottom of the hill, and ended, "I declare I thought I should have dropped just as I was passing Miss Charlton and the young gentleman she brought up with her from the rectory."

"Well now," cried Mr. Sowerby, "that is just what I wanted to speak to you about, Mrs. Windsor. It is very odd you should mention it, isn't it? Let me shut the door," and, stretching over the counter, he pushed it to.

"Well," he said in continuation, "I saw Miss Charlton and the young gentleman and Dr. Western go up the village together, for I was standing at my door, and I wondered who he could be—the young man I mean; but when I found out who he is and all about him, I said to myself, says I, 'that is no bird for Miss Charlton's money, and if Mrs. Windsor should chance to look in, I'll just give her a hint—it is but kind and neighborly.'"

"I'm very much obliged indeed, Mr. Sowerby," replied the housekeeper; "I did not much like the look of him myself, and I said when I saw him, 'he seems but a half-and-half sort of a gentleman after all,' but then I could not say anything to my mistress, because I had got nothing to go upon."

"Well, then, I'll tell you all about it," said Mr. Sowerby. "He's no more than an artist, take my word for it, Mrs. Windsor—and you know my word is good for a thousand pounds at any time—take my word for it he is no more than an artist, going about the country sketching. 'But how did you find it out?' asked Mrs. Windsor; 'I know you are a shrewd one, Mr. Sowerby—not easy to take you in.'"

Mr. Sowerby laughed and shook his head with a look as wise as that of the Athenian fowl, saying, "No, no; but I'll tell you all about it. Last night when the boy brought in my beer for supper from the Bagpipes, I asked him what was the name of the gentleman who had come by the coach. He could not tell a word about it, only that boots said there was E.M. marked upon his umbrella. Well, I could make nothing of that but I told the boy to find out and let me know, and I gave him a penny for himself, Mrs. Windsor; so this morning—for gold is the key to everything—Mrs. Windsor, gold is the key to everything—he brought me word that the gentleman's name is Edmond Morton, for a letter had come for him by post. Well, that was something gained, but I could get no farther, till just about an hour ago in comes Ma thilda Martin—and you know how she talks. Well, she did run on enough to deafen one; but she told me, that their girl, going across the

park to carry a gown piece that the old housekeeper at the hall had bought yesterday, saw this Mr. Morton in the park as early as seven o'clock this morning; and that when she came back, about half an hour after, she chanced upon him again sitting under a tree, with a large book on his knee, drawing away as hard as he could draw—taking a picture, in fact, of the old place."

"But many a gentleman draws now-a-days," answered the housekeeper; "our young lady draws quite beautiful—you would almost think they were real houses and trees."

"Well, you shall hear—you shall hear, Mrs. Windsor," continued the stationer, nodding his head with the solemnity of Jove, though the curls of his wig shed no ambrosial odors around. "As soon as I heard what Mathilda Martin told me, says I, 'Oh, ho! Edmond Morton! I think I have heard that name before,' and reaching up there to the shelf just behind you, Mrs. Windsor, I took down that long book—no, not that one—the one with the blue back, gilt, and lettered—and there I saw—just look into the title—'Sketches in England and Wales, by Thomas Morton, R.A.' Well, you know what a giddy thing Mathilda Martin is, and she immediately fancied that this young man must be the very Thomas Morton, R.A., and that the boy must have made a mistake about the first name. 'But,' says I, 'look at the date, Miss Mathilda;' and there it stood, sure enough, twenty years ago. Now this young man can't be more than five-and-twenty, I should think; and it is not likely he should publish sketches in England and Wales when he was five years old, unless he were a phenomenon. 'No, no, Miss Martin,' I says, 'he is that old Morton's son—he had a son, I know, and his name was Edmond, I am very sure; so you see he is following his father's trade, but I should not think he will make so good a hand of it.'"

"You are quite right, Mr. Sowerby," replied Mrs. Windsor; "and I will tell Mrs. Charlton all about it, and how you found it out, for I think it is very clever;" and after a little more gossip, Mrs. Windsor left the shop with a well-pleased smile, saying to herself, "This will be quite the thing, I fancy."

As soon as she reached Mallington House, she sought her mistress, who was in her dressing-room, and reported progress. Mrs. Charlton smiled likewise, and drew in her eyes a little; but the next moment she looked grave, and said, "It must be all nonsense, Windsor; I do not believe a word of it. Pray tell the people that I think it is all nonsense."

"I will, ma'am," replied Mrs. Windsor, and was going; but her mistress called her back, and added, "Make further inquiries, Windsor, but more quietly, you understand—I wish to hear about it, but without seeming to know."

"Very well, ma'am," replied Mrs. Windsor, and she fulfilled her lady's orders with due discretion, discovering further confirmation of Mr. Sowerby's views. But, to the surprise of all Mallington, the more strong became the presumption that Mr. Morton was an artist, the more marked became Mrs. Charlton's attentions towards him; and Dr. Western observed, with some wonder, that both that evening, during dinner and afterwards, and on an excursion

planned by the lady next day, Mrs. Charlton threw Louisa almost entirely upon Mr. Morton, while she endeavored to monopolize the rectory to herself, so that he mentally inquired, "Hang it, the good lady can't want to marry me, surely," but Mrs. Windsor, knew her mistress better, and watched the game that was playing with some interest.

Mr. Morton did not understand it at all, but found it, as far as it went, not at all unpleasant. With a lovely girl upon his arm, in that very sweet stage of acquaintanceship when first impressions of esteem are warming into intimacy, where each with the other is like the intelligent traveler wandering through a fresh country, and discovering new beauties at every step, where conversation is neither oppressed by deep feelings, nor restrained by strangeness; but all the doors of thought are open, and the heart itself every now and then peeps out to see the sunny world without—it is a pleasant thing—a very pleasant thing indeed, to walk through fair scenes with a fair being like Louisa Charlton, and to listen to a sweet musical voice, and to read a world of fairy tales in bright young eyes, all the brighter for friendly words and kind companionship. Very pleasant indeed. But, perhaps, the reader may ask if it is not somewhat dangerous, too; I can but answer, "That is as it may be."

CHAPTER IX.

In the early morning—and how sweet early morning is, let the tired citizen say, who, after long months of weary toil in the money-getting places of the world, escapes for a short time to taste better pleasures amidst the works of the almighty architect—in the early morning of a summer's day, with the dew still upon the grass, and the light wind destined to die away, like youthful graces, in the sun's meridian light, Edmond Morton walked out of the little inn at which he had taken up his abode, and bent his steps over the bridge to the fine old park which I have noticed in the commencement of this work.

The maids of the inn were just up, and busy, in manifold curl-papers and unwashed faces, setting rooms to rights; and even the boots himself—the most matutinal of all bipeds, except chanticleer—was not by any means sufficiently awakened to be as brisk and active as at all ordinary hours he showed himself. Mrs. Pluckrose was still—I should say in the arms of Morpheus, were there not something indecorous in the figure—but sound asleep; and walking out, with clothes that had been brushed and boots that had been blacked the night before, Mr. Morton gave no trouble to, and attracted little attention from, any one. On the old stone bridge of three irregular arches—very irregular indeed they were, for each differed from the other in point of shape as well as size—he paused and gazed for a minute or two into the stream, on the bosom of which numerous dabchicks and water hens were swimming about, undoubtedly thinking that no man with a gun would feel inclined to annoy them so early in the morning. They might have found themselves mistaken; but certainly in regard to

Edmond Morton they were in the right, for he did not feel disposed to do them any harm; and they appeared to understand it well; for as he looked over the parapet upon the water, though they turned up towards him the shrewd inquiring eye, they did not hurry off to their sedge-lurking places, as they would have done at a later hour, nor dive down in eager haste to escape the anticipated shot. He was not bloodily disposed, indeed; and yet there was a stout old trout, who had escaped many perils, and grown to aldermanic bulk, to hang, head against stream, at the tail of a pleasant ripple, that did move a little in his bosom the tiger that is more or less in the hearts of all men. He thought it would be a pleasant thing on a fine May morning to bring that fellow to the landing-place; but neither rod nor line had he with him at the moment, and even if he had, it was getting somewhat late in the year to trifle with trout, so that the tyrant of the stream would have been safe.

Now heaven only knows what connection there was between the sight of that trout and so different a being as Louisa Charlton. The mind rarely jumps, however, though it runs up many a ladder with surprising swiftness; and there are general links—or, to pursue the metaphor, steps of association—between each thought that presents itself and another; and therefore undoubtedly—whether it was that he thought it would be agreeable to withdraw that fair girl from all that surrounded her, and carry her away with him, as he had proposed to do with the trout; or whether angling for a pretty wife was a sport he found pleasure in; or whether anything else in the wide expanse of possibility linked the two together, certain it is that the next thought which presented itself to his imagination was Louisa Charlton. It served him all across the bridge, and up to the park gates, which lay at the end of a short avenue, of not more than two hundred yards in length. But there, just as he was about to pull the cucumber-shaped handle of an old bell that hung beside the wrought-iron trellis work, he paused and looked at the windows of the lodge, saying to himself "It is needless to rouse the good old dame before her hour."

The dimity curtains were closely drawn across the lattice; and taking that indication in good part, he walked back to the bridge again, and gazed once more into the stream. The trout was still there, just where he left it; but Morton did not see it at all, for he had now got something else to think of; and he went on with Louisa Charlton very pleasantly, as if he were taking a sunny walk with her through the fairy land of fancy.

In about ten minutes he turned round his head towards the gates, and saw the old dame who kept the lodge open the casement and hook it back—her summer morning's first task—and sauntering gently on, he now rang the bell.

"Oh! is it you, sir!" said the good lady, who had seen him there more than once before, putting out her head; "I will come in a minute;" and after she had fastened her gown and put on her pockets, in the same fashion that her mother wore them—and she was an old woman—she came to the gates and unlocked them with a curtesy, saying as she did so, "The other gate up the stream is always open—ay, and must be

so, for some one broke the lock off—a mischievous young rogue he must have been—and ever since my lord's death the bailiff says he has no orders."

"And pray who is your lord now, my good lady?" asked Mr. Morton.

"Ay, sir, that is hard to say," answered Dame Witherton; "an old gentleman, I have heard tell, of the name of Wilmot—a parson, it seems, and very fond of money."

"He ought to spend some here to put the house in better order," answered Morton. "It is truly a pity to see so fine a place as this might be, if well kept up, falling into decay."

"Ay, that it is, indeed," answered the old woman with a sigh. "I remember it quite a different thing; but even Edmonds, the park-keeper, is falling out of heart. He can't get the workpeople paid, and is obliged to discharge them, poor man; though it breaks his heart to see the gravel walks getting weedy, and the trees all straggling, and the people stealing the game. But he cannot pay men himself—that is impossible. It is bad enough for him, with a family, to live here without his own wages; and work night and day for people that don't say 'Thank you.'"

"Quite enough, indeed, and too much, I should suppose," replied Mr. Morton; "but I suppose this Edmonds is fond of the place."

"Ay, that he is," answered Dame Witherton, "it is all his delight, sir—his hobby, as Dr. Western calls it—and he could not go away for his very life. Why, I remember him—Lord bless you, sir—a little curly-headed boy, born in that very cottage where he now lives, for his father, poor Tim Edmonds, was park-keeper before him."

"And where does he live, my good dame," asked the visitor at Mallington.

"Bless you, sir—why, don't you know!" exclaimed the lady of the lodge, as if every one who had twice entered the gates of the park was bound to be as well aware of all the secrets hid in its recesses as herself. "Why, you have seen that pretty house just hidden from the hall by the tall trees in front. That's where John Edmonds lives."

"I will walk up and see him," answered Morton. "I want to have a ramble all over the park from one end to the other."

"Then he is just the man to show it you," rejoined the old lady; "for there is not a rabbit has a burrow in the place but he knows all the ins and outs of it."

Fully relying upon the accuracy of her statements, Edmond Morton walked on to seek out the house of the park-keeper, which he was not long in accomplishing, for, to say the truth, he had not dealt fairly with the good old woman, having clearly understood before the conversation began, which was the dwelling of John Edmonds; but, having a sort of cynical belief that there is nothing so pleasant to "withered old" as to tell a story its own way, he had let her go on—nay, had encouraged her so to do, without giving a hint of the stores of information he possessed. Those stores were, indeed, derived from no occult sciences which he possessed, nor from secret communications with any one; but having wandered about the park some days before, he had remarked a nice-looking lady

house, amongst the trees, out of sight of the windows of the hall, and had said to himself, "That must be the park-keeper's, I suppose."

Thither, however, he now bent his steps, and at the end of about a quarter of an hour, perceived the lodge amongst the trees. Everything was neat about it; and the evidences of man's careful spirit gave the place a cheerful look, though it was actually somewhat decayed, and one of the chimneys had a strong inclination to fall. The door had no bell, but as Morton had a very great disinclination to intrude upon any one, high or low, he knocked before he entered. A voice said, "Come in," and accordingly Mr. Morton did as he was bid.

The interior presented a scene somewhat difficult to describe; for it had so many relations with antecedents, to the feelings of those who bore a part in it, that all its interest lay in things that were gone. Abstracted from those, it was but the house of an English peasant, at meal time — one not ill to do, either. At a round oaken table, in the midst of a low-roofed thick-raftered chamber, which had five pots of flowers in each small-paned casement, were seated John Edmonds, his wife, a son of about ten years old, and a daughter of somewhat more than double that term. There had been three children between the two; but the sicknesses of childhood had reduced them to that number; and those that were lost had stored memory with regrets which rendered those that remained doubly dear to the park-keeper and his wife.

Edmonds himself was still a hale, well-looking, stout man of fifty, long limbed and active, clothed in a green coat, somewhat the worse for wear, with yellow buttons adorned with a rusty fox, corduroy breeches, and leathern gaiters up to his knees. A checked handkerchief was round his neck, quite clean, like the collar of his shirt, but with a hole in the corner. There were other holes not shown; but the time had been, not long ago, when he would not have worn a handkerchief with a hole in it on any account. His countenance was somewhat moody and irritable, neither by feature nor by habitual expression, but by temporary causes; but as he saw a stranger it instantly cleared. His wife was a plainly but very neatly dressed woman, about three years younger than himself, with considerable traces still remaining of beauty, worn away by daily toil and constant exposure to sun and wind. The boy was a stout, rosy urchin, very like his father, with a merry round face, black eyes, and curly hair. The daughter was one of those sweet flowers sometimes seen in cottage windows, which instantly make one think that they ought to have some better shelter against the wintry wind and burning sun. Her features were fine and delicate; her hair beautiful, and shining like new-spun silk; her eyes full of tender and confiding light; her complexion warm yet soft; and her form full both of youthful grace and womanly contour. Small hands, small feet, small lips, all were as symmetrical as if the blood of whole races of patricians had flowed in her veins; and the beautiful shape of her neck and throat, the fine setting-on of the head, with the few natural curls that escaped from where the hair was turned up, gave a classical look to her bust,

which might well call the eye of the connoisseur to admire, and wonder how such loveliness found shelter in an English cottage. Her dress was very plain, and even coarse, but neat and clean. The time had been when it had been a matter of fatherly vanity or love, to deck that fair form in garments more becoming; but that time had passed, and Lucy Edmonds did not give them a sigh. Her father did, however.

The fare before them was plain but good, and though it had once been better, none of them cared much about that; but two or three of the lozenges in the casement had been broken, and were filled up with paper neatly cut and pasted in, and that was a sad eyesore to the park-keeper. In other days he would have paid the replacing of the missing glass from his own pocket, if his lord had not done it; but now he could not afford the expense, and he felt the want of neatness bitterly. At that moment he felt it more than ever, when he beheld a stranger. So long as no eyes but his own saw it, he could away with it, though he often looked at the broken panes with a rueful countenance; but that another eye should mark them grieved him, and he had recourse to a little artifice to hide them as much as possible.

No sooner did he perceive who it was that entered than, rising, he gave the young gentleman "good morning," and taking a bundle from a chair, which he placed for his visitor with its back to the lattice, he laid the bundle on the window sill, and returned to his seat. His wife understood well enough what it all meant, and while Morton seated himself frankly, and entered into conversation with her husband, she rose quietly and arranged the things in the window better than Edmonds had done in his haste, putting a large geranium, with broad round leaves, a little on one side, so as to cover entirely one of the two patches, while the bundle hid the other.

"Good morning, Mr. Edmonds," said Morton, in reply to the park-keeper's salutation. "I beg your pardon for breaking in upon you at this hour, but I am fond of an early walk, and"—

"Don't mention it, sir," said Edmonds, interrupting him, but not rudely; "very happy to see you. Is there anything I can do for you, sir? I have seen you taking your walk before now, and looking about. I am always glad to see any one that takes notice of the park; it was a mighty pretty place once, but it is getting a little out of order now, for want of hands."

"Why, I wish, with your permission, to walk all over it," answered Morton, "and should feel very much obliged if you would accompany me. I do not know whether you are aware that there is some talk of the place being sold, and a friend of mine is thinking of buying it."

This was evidently news to poor Edmonds; and though, for a moment, a good many visions of a nice family purchasing the hall, and of the park being put into good order again, and of all the gravel walks being in trim array, and of the lady's walk being rolled out twice a week, and of himself being retained as head park-keeper, came before his eyes; yet he did not feel altogether so comfortable as he ought

to have been, for there is more of the spirit of clanship in all faithful servants than we know of, and there was something in the idea of Mallington Hall being sold out of the family of Mallington that grated harshly upon his mind.

"I did not know that it could be sold, sir," he answered, "but I have seen so many things I never thought to see, that this does not surprise me. However, sir, I am quite ready to walk with you this moment."

"No, no, finish your breakfast, Mr. Edmonds," replied Morton; "do not let me disturb you. I am in no hurry;" and entering into conversation first with one and then with another, in a kindly tone, frank, but not too familiar, cheerful, but not jocular, the young gentleman was soon upon good terms with the whole family. He even took a slice of brown bread, just to keep the good man in countenance while he concluded his meal, and munched away heartily with the rest.

In about five minutes, Edmonds and his visitor were upon their feet, and walking out into the park. Up one alley and down another the young gentleman was led, round the walks, across the leas and lawns, through the wilderness—not the least afraid of wetting his feet—to the obelisk on the hill behind the house.

Much to the satisfaction of the park-keeper, Mr. Morton observed everything with the eye of taste, admired the natural beauties of the place, and again and again expressed his regret at seeing it running wild. At first his companion was well pleased to hear his lamentations over the neglect; but as Morton repeated them several times, he felt as if there were some covert reproach to himself in his words, and he replied "Well, sir, it is a pity, surely—a very great pity; but I cannot help it. In my lord's time I had seven pair of hands under me in this park, besides the three gamekeepers who lived outside, and who used to do a turn now and then in the spring and summer; but now there is not a soul to help me, and I myself have no call to do anything, for I am no man's servant now; only I can't bear to see it all going to ruin, so wherever it seems most needed I work away. But I can't keep things right altogether any how, all by myself."

"That is quite impossible," said the young gentleman; "but yet it is a terrible pity, indeed, to see so much pains and labor, and so much good taste, as have been employed upon the place, altogether thrown away and lost for want of attention. Why, whoever buys the property, if it go on at this rate, will have to spend many hundreds of pounds to put it right again."

"That he will, sir," answered Edmonds. "Before six months be over it will be quite a wilderness; for I must look out for something to do myself. Here, my lord has been dead a good bit more than a year, and I have had but one month's wages from that time. I cannot go on so, sir. All my earnings are going fast enough, I can tell you."

"Well!" exclaimed Morton, as if in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, "I declare I will not see it fall into such a state. I will tell you what, Edmonds—I will lend a hand."

"You, sir!" cried the park-keeper, looking at him with a smile. "Lord bless you, you could do little enough. Not that I mean to say you are not a strong man, very; for you are just the sort of made person who would get through a good deal, but you have never been used to such sort of work, I'll warrant."

The young gentleman laughed merrily. "No, no; you mistake me, Edmonds," he said. "I am not going to take your place over your head. I should have said I will lend the money, not lend a hand. Then, if my friend does not buy the place, why I suppose I must have it myself—that's all."

"Ay, sir; I thought there was something of that," replied Edmonds, shrewdly. "Gentlemen do not come down to look at places for other people, unless they be auctioneers, and such like. Well, I am glad, if it must go, that a gentleman should have it, who seems to like it and value it, and cares about such things."

"But remember, Edmonds," said the young gentleman, putting his finger on his lips, "not a word about this to a living soul, unless it be good Dr. Western—not to your wife or daughter, even; for the matter is not yet quite settled. But now to business, Edmonds," and he took out a pocket-book. "You must get four or five hands—not more; for the matter may go off yet, and then, you know, I should be a loser."

"Five good hands, at twelve shillings a week, sir, will make a strange change in no time," answered the park-keeper, "and we have many a poor fellow about here that is now out of work since my lord died."

"Ay, the loss of one wealthy man, in a place like this, is a misfortune indeed," said Morton. "Then there are your own wages, Edmonds?"

"Why, I used to have seventy pounds a year, and the house and garden, sir," observed the park-keeper, "but now—"

"Well, call it one pound ten a week," rejoined Morton; "that will make four pounds ten. There are twenty pounds, which will pay all for the next month; and if I should be away when it is done, speak to Dr. Western. He will settle with you. But remember! not a word to any one else."

"No, no, sir; I will be as mum as a mouse," replied the park-keeper; "but what am I to say if people ask me?"

"Oh! merely that you have your orders and your money, and that is all you care about," replied Morton.

"Well, sir, I am sure I am very much obliged, indeed," said the man, taking the money. "I know Dr. Western very well—a kind, good gentleman he is. When my poor boy Willy died, he was with him twice every day—that he was."

"He is a good man," answered the young gentleman, "and he spoke to me about you, Edmonds, and gave you a high character. But now I should like to see the house, if we can manage it without letting the folks know what it is for."

"Oh! dear, yes, sir," said the park-keeper, "that is easily done," and leading the way down, he had soon introduced his companion to the old housekeeper, and the three walked over every room of the Hall together.

Here and there Mr. Morton stopped and examined everything closely. He looked at the old pictures of the Mallington family. He gazed round the deserted drawing-room with feelings which every one must have known, when standing where gay multitudes of happy hearts, long cold, have once tasted the bright hours of life; but he paused long in the library, took down several books and examined them, seeming especially interested in a manuscript volume, which bore upon its back "History of the Mallington family."

While he was thus employed, the housekeeper and Edmonds stood at the window and looked out. Some of their observations caught the gentleman's ear, and he suddenly turned round, when through the casement he perceived a young man in a shooting jacket, crossing the park, at a couple of hundred yards distance. He was a tall, powerful, handsome youth, and Mr. Morton inquired "Who is that?"

"Why that is Mr. Alfred Latimer, sir," answered the park-keeper, "the son of Mrs. Charlton, on the hill. It's a pity he goes on so, for I do not think he is so bad at heart after all; and he has always been very kind and civil to me ever since I looked over his shooting a pheasant or two when he was a boy."

"Ah! he is a bad one," said the old housekeeper; "you always took his part, Edmonds, but he is a bad one, and you'll find that out some day. Would you like to look at the kitchens, sir?"

"No, I thank you," replied Morton; "now Mr. Edmonds, I will go;" and walking out with his guide he took leave of him, adding, ere they parted, "I could wish the house taken better care of. They seem to have been cutting off the leaden pipes at the corners."

"Ay, that was done by a pack of blackguards, last winter," answered Edmonds.

"They will commit further depredations if they be not checked," replied Morton. "I wish we could have the place better protected, for I am likely to take it just as it stands; but we will think of that hereafter.—Good day."

CHAPTER X.

INSTEAD of turning his steps to his own house, Edmonds, the head park-keeper, who had in former days not only acted in that capacity but as head gamekeeper also; and had, moreover, superintended the arrangement of the gardens—for he was a sort of Gilpin in low life—stood upon the terrace before the house for some minutes, as if he were enjoying the beauties of the prospect. The housekeeper, too, remained at the door without closing it, looking after Mr. Morton as he walked away. Now, it is a very difficult thing to be looked at as one walks away gracefully. If we are conscious that people are staring at our backs, the slightest portion of vanity in the world will lift us up on our toes with a spring; the slightest portion of pride will make our shoulders as stiff as a board; the slightest portion of *mauvaise honte* will make us bend our heads, and walk awkwardly for fear of swaggering. But Morton, whether he was unaware that any one was gazing after him,

or whether he was neither vain, proud, nor bashful, went on with quiet ease; and Mrs. Chalke, the housekeeper, admired his back very much.

"That's a gentleman, whoever he is, Edmonds," she said at length, after having passed about two minutes in contemplation.

Edmonds started and turned round; but he agreed heartily in her commendation, saying, "Yes, that he is, indeed, Mrs. Chalke; we seldom see such a one in these parts."

"I wonder who he is," rejoined the old lady; "do you know, Edmonds?"

"No, that I don't," answered the park-keeper. "Now I think of it, I did not even recollect to ask his name. But Dr. Western knows, Mrs. Chalke; for he talked a good deal about the rector, and said he was an excellent man."

"And so he is," replied the good old lady; but—and the old lady went on to communicate to Edmonds all her fears and apprehensions regarding her stay at Mallington Hall with none but one housemaid, whom she was obliged to keep herself. "I declare," she said, "that whatever comes of it, I won't stay another winter here in this way. I am sure I was well nigh frightened out of my life last winter; and if the people who cut off the pipes and tried to find a way in at the back door had known that there was such a quantity of plate in the house, they would have broken in to a certainty; that they would. But they all think that my lord took the plate to London with him the last time he was down; and so he did take the plate, and the two great soup tureens, and one set of dishes; but, nevertheless, there's enough here in the plate-room to tempt those vagabonds down at the Clove Tree, and if they were to find it out I should be a dead woman."

"Well, before the long nights come," said Edmonds, "I will think what can be done, and if we can't manage better, I will come up here and sleep myself. But I must go away now, Mrs. Chalke, for I want to speak with Blackmore about the garden. Something must be done to get it in order, that's clear. Why, it's quite a wilderness."

"Ay, that it is," answered Mrs. Chalke, "but who is to pay for doing it, Edmonds?"

"Why, I don't know," answered Edmonds, "but I dare say some one will, if it's done. Whoever the place comes to ought. Good day, Mrs. Chalke," and he walked away.

Taking his way through the park towards the gate which, as the old lady at the lodge had said, always stood open, he went leisurely on, meditating with no little satisfaction upon the events of the morning. He had by this time become reconciled to the idea of Mallington Park going out of the family, and visions of a thousand pleasant changes, under the auspices of Mr. Morton, presented themselves to his imagination by the way. When he was about two-thirds through the park, he caught a glimpse of the very man he was thinking of, seated at the foot of a tree, employed with his paper and pencil in sketching the bridge, which was just seen spanning the river through an opening in the trees, with the village of Mallington well massed against the hill rising up beyond. Edmonds paused to look at him for a moment;

but, though he was within two or three hundred yards, he did not think fit to approach, notwithstanding several questions which had suggested themselves to his mind, and which he much wished to put to his few acquaintance.

"He takes a mighty delight in the place, surely," said the park-keeper to himself; "I should like to be able to draw in that way. It would be so nice to have the house all hung with pictures of the park. Why, there's Mr. Latimer coming up to him. I hope he won't be saucy, for he's just as likely to say an uncivil thing as a civil one—no, he seems to be polite enough. He's talking to him about his drawing, I dare say. Ay, there now, he's looking at it," and a moment after Morton rose, put the sketch-book in his pocket, and walked away with Alfred Latimer, at an easy and sauntering pace. In the meanwhile the park-keeper pursued his way, passed through the gate, and, following the road which ran from the bridge, along the stream under the park wall, reached, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, a small cottage built upon the bank of the river, with a little garden round it, occupying the whole space between the highway and the water. It was neatly and beautifully kept, for Blackmore, the gardener, after quitting the service of Mr. Charlton, many years before, under circumstances which the reader may recollect, had soon found another place; but at the end of two years had fallen from a tree and broken his thigh, which threw him for many months out of employment. He had then, nearly crippled by the accident, devoted himself to the cultivation of this little piece of ground, and made a scanty livelihood by selling the produce at Mallington. He always found a ready market, indeed, for what he could produce, for he was the most scientific gardener in the neighborhood, but still his means were too limited to allow of any great sale, and to keep the wolf from the door was all that he could accomplish. Another great misfortune had befallen him. His son had proved wild, intractable, and idle; and the abilities which had once made his father's heart glad, had, by inducing an overweening self-conceit, proved a bane instead of a blessing. At almost any hour of the day, from sunrise to sunset, Blackmore was to be met with in his garden, and there Edmonds now found him laboring away, in his ordinary working dress, with a sad and thoughtful countenance.

"Well, Blackmore," said the park-keeper, after the usual country salutations, "I think I have got some good news for you."

"Indeed!" said Blackmore looking up. "I shall be very glad to hear them, Mr. Edmonds, for I have got some bad news for you, and for every one else in the neighborhood."

"Ay! what is that?" demanded Edmonds. "I was in hopes it was going to turn out a lucky day."

"There's but little luck for me, any how," answered Blackmore; "but my news is that Master Alfred has come back again."

"Pooh! is that all!" exclaimed the park-keeper. "You are too harsh with that lad, Blackmore. He's not a bad youth at bottom. His mother has spoilt him, that's all. He will

soon sow his wild oats, and turn out better than you think."

"He's a bad-hearted young villain," answered Blackmore sternly. "He was bad as a boy, is bad as a youth, and will be bad as a man. There's no good in him, Mr. Edmonds. He's as vain and conceited as he's vicious and violent, and that's what makes him like to associate with people below himself; because people of his own station in life won't let him lead or bully, or have all his own way. It is because he wishes to be flattered and made a miracle of, and be cock of the walk, that makes him keep company with such folks as my son and Billy Maltby, and others like them. I could forgive and forget all that he did when he was a boy, and all that his mother did too, but I can't forgive his having corrupted my lad John, and made a drunken, idle vagabond of him."

"Well, perhaps, he will behave better now," said Edmonds. "He has been away for five months, and may have improved."

"Improved!" said Blackmore, in a sullen tone. "He'll never improve. What was the first thing he did when he came back? Why, instead of going to his mother's house, like any other gentleman, he went down to the Clove Tree, and there he sat drinking and playing dice till two o'clock, this morning, so my good woman tells me. Poor thing! he's helped to break her heart, however, for our boy would never have gone on so if it had not been for him; and there he sat winning money from one or two; but losing it preciously to Bill Maltby, and, I dare say, not very fairly either. Then he went back to the inn to sleep, but Mrs. Pluckrose had had the house shut up, and would not have her people let him in, so he was forced to go home, I suppose, though they say he swore at his mother like a graceless young villain, and damned her, I know not how many times, before the whole of the raff of the Clove Tree, because he said she had grown stingy, and would not give him enough to keep him like a gentleman, or pay his debts."

"That's bad—that's very bad!" said Edmonds. "However, Blackmore, there's no use of talking about him; I shall give him a lecture when I see him, and he always listens quietly enough to what I say. What I have to tell you is, that I have got orders at last from some one, I don't know who—but as the money came with them, that's all I have to care for—to put the park in order, and I dare say the garden is meant too. Now, as poor old Wilkinson, our head man, died of his cough, last winter, I don't see why you shouldn't come up, and see to getting the garden to rights with any help you can have. Then, being on the spot, you know, you will have a chance of the place when whoever has the hall comes down."

Blackmore held out his hand to him with a glad smile, exclaiming, "Now that's kind of you, Mr. Edmonds—that's very kind of you, it's just like you, and I'll be very glad of the job, whether it goes on or not; for nothing is doing so well as it used to do, and that boy will be the ruin of me, as well as break my heart—that he has done well nigh already. Oh! Mr. Edmonds, if any one had told me of

him that I was so proud of—when I used to think, because he could do anything almost he turned his hand to, and was more like a gentleman's son than a gardener's, that he might one day be a great man and make his fortune—if any one had told me that he would one day be an idle, worthless vagabond, I would have little believed it."

"We should never try to make our children gentlemen, Blackmore," said the park-keeper. "It's a great mistake. It's only grafting a twig on a stock that won't bear it. If there's anything really above the mark in them it will come out without our help."

"Ah! it was all that Alfred Latimer," said the poor gardener; "he ruined him. When first he used to take the boy out rabbit shooting on the common, I used not to like it; but I little thought what it would come to. I remember well enough when he and I had the quarrel about the melon beds up at Mallington House, and I took him in by the arm, and his mother took his part—though the good old gentleman took mine, and found him out in all his lies—he said he would be revenged some day—and revenged he has been, indeed: but here comes John and Bill Maltby, I shan't say much to him, for if I do I may say more than I intend;" and once more shaking the park-keeper by the hand, he walked into the house.

"I'll say something to the young scamp, however," said Edmonds to himself as the gardener retreated; and, waiting calmly at the little wicket of the garden, he watched John Blackmore and his companion sauntering leisurely up with a grave fixed look that neither of them seemed particularly to like.

The first was a young man of about nineteen, with an air of vulgar finery about him, which was anything but prepossessing. He wore his light whiskers long and curling, with a good deal of shirt collar, not very clean, and round his neck a blue satin handkerchief fastened in front with a coarse paste pin. His waistcoat was of divers colors, and displayed to the best advantage a gilt guard chain, not very new. His trousers were loose and somewhat too long for their wearer, dragged and dirty about the heels; and his coat, in the extreme of a past fashion, was of a color too light not to display more signs of age than were even afforded by the antiquity of the cut.

The other man was of a very different aspect. He was, perhaps, two or three and twenty years of age, strongly built, though spare, broad in the shoulders, thin in the flanks, long in the limbs. His head was small and round as a ball, his hair cut short, but the portion which was wanting on the cranium, was made up by the superabundance upon the cheek and under the chin, where the whole exuberant growth was amply displayed by the turning down of the shirt collar over a thin black neckerchief, loosely tied round the neck. His features were small and generally well cut, the nose somewhat too short, and the underlip too thick. The quick, keen, gray eyes, under an overhanging brow, were bright and clear, and the chin prominent but well rounded. His air was free and bold; and there was a look of decision and indifferent impudence about his whole aspect, which was only contradicted by the sharp and inquisitive glance

of the eye that seemed to mark everything it fell upon, as if with a consciousness of danger. His dress was plainer than that of his companion, but yet fresher, and of a more suitable character, consisting of a round jacket of dark cloth, a light colored waistcoat buttoned only in one hole, a pair of gray trousers, very white stockings and shoes cut low in the quarter like those generally worn by sailors. Indeed, his whole appearance had somewhat of a nautical air, and he only wanted the corkscrew curls of hair on each cheek, and the peculiar walk, to pass at first sight for a seaman well to do in life.

Edmonds, as I have said, eyed them sternly as they came forward, and his fixed gaze was not pleasant to either party; but the younger of the two felt it most, and he looked down upon the ground, while the other returned the stare unabashed, though he whispered a word to his companion with a smile curling his lip, as if in contempt of the good park-keeper.

The latter, however, was not a man to be checked by either looks or speeches in any course he might think fit to pursue, and his eye never winked after it had once settled upon John Blackmore and his companion, and when they came near he said at once "Well, John, the same courses I find—what will come of it, think you!"

"What should come of it, Mr. Edmonds?" asked the youth.

"Dishonesty, beggary, wickedness, and the gallows, I should think," replied Edmonds. "Here you are emptying your poor father's pockets, breaking his heart, and ruining him with your extravagance and folly; and wasting your time, losing your character—if ever you had any—and ruining yourself body and soul with a pack of scamps and vagabonds, who first make a fool of you and then laugh at you, and will very soon kick you off to thieve, beg, or die on a dunghill."

"I mind my own affairs, Mr. Edmonds," answered John Blackmore; "and you had better mind yours, too."

"What is that, master keeper, you said about scamps and vagabonds!" demanded Billy Maltby, walking a step or two closer to Edmonds, with a look of cold daring.

"I said," replied the keeper, without moving an inch, "that he keeps company with nothing but such."

"Then you mean me amongst the rest," said Maltby, in the same tone.

"At the head of them," replied Edmonds.

"Then take that for your pains!" exclaimed the other, aiming an overhand blow at his head.

But if he was strong and scientific in the noble science of the ring, the park-keeper was stronger and no less skillful; and, instantly parrying the blow with his left hand, he returned with the right, striking his opponent so hard on the eye, that the surrounding bone seemed to crack under the stroke, and in an instant he was lying on his back on the road. He was up in a second, however, and springing at his opponent with fury, was knocked down again before he could plant a blow. Old Blackmore rushed out of his house at the sound of contention; a stout fellow, who had been one of the

under-keepers, ran up from a cottage hard by; and Maltby, with a furious oath, pulled off his coat, called for a ring, and challenged Edmonds to fight it out on the spot. The park-keeper hesitated for an instant, for the bull-dog spirit of John Bull was strong within him; but, after a brief consideration, he said, "No, I won't—I'm a father of a family, my lad, and have given over such tricks; but I'll tell you what I will do: If ever you are saucy to me again, or if ever I find you lurking about the park or in the covers, I will give you such a hiding as will save some one a deal of trouble; so take care of yourself, that's all; for you've had a taste, and only a taste; but you shall have as much as you can carry the next time. Come along with me, Wilson, I've something to say to you," and he walked away, with the under-keeper, turning a deaf ear to the taunts and insults which Billy Maltby judged it expedient to pour upon him.

CHAPTER XI.

I must now beg the reader to put on his hat—for it is yet the early morning, and walking under forest trees before the dew has risen with an uncovered head is not sane—and to step back with me to the spot where Mr. Edmond Morton sat under a tree—it was an imprudent proceeding—sketching the bridge. I wonder how he could be so silly; but poets, and painters, and sportsmen, are always very foolish, and are as fond of "brushing the morning dew," as they call it, as a deer, forgetting that their shoes are not horny ones of nature's providing, but of very penetrable leather. However, there he sat sketching, till, turning his eyes a little to the right, in the direction where the keeper's house lay in its little glen, hidden by the trees, he beheld Alfred Latimer coming, with a quick and hurried pace, towards the spot where he had placed himself.

Now, like many other men, who have an overweening opinion of their own merits, Alfred Latimer was shy of people at all in his own station of life. His class is a very common one, where pride and vanity are mingled together in such portions as to exacerbate each other, and where the opinion of our own merits is not of that calm and comfortable kind which renders us perfectly sure that every man of sense will esteem and appreciate us as we do ourselves; but, on the contrary, is of the irritable and suspicious kind, which leads us to fear that our qualities will not be so readily recognised as we think they ought to be, and consequently to seek such society alone as will receive any adventitious circumstances of rank or wealth as sure claims to admiration and respect. He would not have thought of speaking to Mr. Morton first for the world; that gentleman's dress and appearance, and the high-bred air about him, would have been an impassable barrier against such a proceeding. But Morton himself had his own views and purposes; and as he saw the widow's son walking on with a shy glance towards him, he first beckoned to him; and, as Alfred Latimer did not choose to see the sign, he raised his voice and called, taking care not to rise.

"May I speak with you for a moment," he said; and the young gentleman, with a quick, but unwilling step, approached.

"Pray, can you tell me," continued Morton, pointing with his pencil to a spot in the distance, where, following the course of the valley, the eye rested on a tower which seemed that of a church, and then to his sketch, where the same object was represented in a few bold light strokes. "Pray, can you tell me what is the name of that place?" and he added, with an accurate, yet seemingly careless hand, several strokes to the drawing.

"That is called Steeple Melford," replied the young man, looking over his shoulder, and set at once at ease by the familiarity of the stranger.

"Is it a town or a village?" asked Morton, going on.

"Oh, nothing but a little village," replied Latimer, still looking at his progress. "How quick you draw."

"Habit, habit!" answered Morton; "but I think that will do," and he rose.

"Why, you do not call that finished, do you?" demanded the young gentleman; "you will never be able to make anything out of that."

"Oh, yes," replied Morton, "as you will see, if you call upon me in a day or two at the inn. It is all I want; and so now I will go back again. You reside here, I think."

As he spoke he took a step forward, and Alfred Latimer followed him, while replying "Yes, I generally do. My mother has a house at the top of the hill there, and when we are good friends I live with her—when we are not I go away."

"Why you never quarrel with your mother, do you?" said Morton, in a good-humored tone. "That's a bad plan."

"No, we don't exactly quarrel," answered Alfred Latimer; "but sometimes she does not choose to give me money enough, and then I go away, and that is sure to bring her round."

"But, perhaps, she cannot afford to give it to you," said Morton; "she may not have it to give."

"That is what she says," replied the other, "but it is all an excuse. Why, the old man left her very well off, and the guardians allow my sister Louisa twelve hundred a year, and the whole of that, except two hundred that she keeps for her dress, goes to my mother for the house, so that she could let me have more if she liked, I am sure."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Morton, thoughtfully. "We young men do not always calculate very accurately what our parents can afford. I recollect when I was your age thinking it very hard to have no more than two hundred a year allowed me at college; but I have found out since that it was all my father could then afford to allow me, and more than was convenient. I know your mother, and her establishment is expensive."

"Ay, why does she keep up such a one?" said Alfred Latimer. "It is upon that and her dress that the money goes. But she won't be without anything that she has a mind to have, and yet grumbles when I want a few pounds."

Here, she has had two or three dinner parties this last week, and pic-nics, and all sort of things, they tell me, and yet when I wrote to her to send me fifty pounds, she vowed she had not got as much in the world, and sent me ten."

"But in that case why don't you apply to some other relation or friend?" inquired his companion. "If the money is absolutely necessary to you to pay a bill, or anything of that kind, I dare say you could easily borrow it."

"Necessary enough, by Jove!" cried young Latimer, "for a fellow in London to whom I owe a small sum threatens to arrest me, so I was obliged to make myself scarce, as they call it; and, as to borrowing the money, I know no one who has got it to lend. Louisa would let me have it soon enough if she had it; but she sent me all her last quarter, except ten pounds, six weeks ago, and she will not have any more till the 29th of September, for those old screws, her guardians, are as hard as flint. None of my friends have a *son* to bless themselves with, and my relations—a set of proud blackguards—take no notice of me because my father chose to marry against their consent—devil fly away with them!"

"You would find it a good plan, Mr. Latimer," said Morton, "to make friends amongst people who can give you assistance in whatever way you may want it; and there are many sorts of assistance much more important and valuable than such a trifle as forty or fifty pounds."

"Ah! I understand what you mean," answered Latimer, "to make acquaintance with fashionable people; but they are all so d——d stupid. They are as cold and dull as lead, and up to no fun; and I doubt much whether they would think forty or fifty pounds such a trifle as you fancy, for they are stingy enough, I can tell you."

"I have not found them so," replied Morton, "and for my own part I am always willing to lend a friend what he wants, as far as my means go; and so," he continued, pulling open the iron gate of the park, and going out first, "if your mother cannot let you have the fifty pounds you want, I will; for she has been very kind and courteous to me since I have been here; and I should like to make her any return, by assisting her son."

"Upon my life, you are an excellent fellow!" cried Alfred Latimer, who had not the slightest hesitation in regard to borrowing money wherever he could get it. "I will pay you as soon as I can; for I have my own annuity, and in the meantime I will give you my I O U."

Morton smiled, but made no reply, for his young companion's words showed that he was not altogether unaccustomed to the trade of borrowing, and confirmed him in the belief which he had entertained from the first, that the money he was about to lend would never be repaid; and yet, strange to say, he was even, perhaps, the more willing to lend it on that account. "If I can obtain a hold upon this youth," he thought, "and by the loss of a few pounds, lent him from time to time, render him in some degree bound to me by necessity, if not by gratitude, I may, perhaps, disentangle him from his low and vicious companions, and

gradually lead him at all events into a better way of life, if not into higher and nobler thoughts. It is at all events worth the while."

Who was he thinking of when he indulged in these meditations! I suspect, dear reader, that once more Louisa Charlton had something to do with the matter; for certainly Alfred Latimer had not greatly preposessed him in his favor; and it was hardly to be expected, however Quixotic might be his benevolence, that he should be thus studious to reclaim a dissolute youth upon the pure principles of abstract benevolence.

However that might be, he walked on, talking with his young companion, over the bridge into the little inn and up to his own rooms, where, taking the I O U which the other offered, he gave him ten five pound notes, much to Latimer's satisfaction. The borrower was quite ready to leave the lender the moment he had got the money; but Morton detained him for nearly an hour, showing him a portfolio of drawings, and engaging him to talk of various subjects, which, as his heart was opened by what he internally called "his piece of marvellous good luck," he was willing enough to do.

On most points he displayed very gross ignorance; for though he had acquired a certain knowledge of Latin and Greek, a smattering of French, and a few other accomplishments, all the more valuable part of education was wanting. Like so many others, he had acquired words rather than ideas—forms rather than substance; he spoke without understanding—argued, but did not reason—and had, in short, been instructed, but not educated. Nevertheless, Morton gained one object which he had in view: he obtained, even by his short conference, a great, even an extraordinary influence over Alfred Latimer's mind. There was something in his conversation which entertained and amused the young man, and yet, whether he would or not, commanded his respect. It was light and cheerful, easy and flowing, but not too familiar; and, at the same time, there flowed through it an under-current of strong good sense and high-toned feeling, which never obtruded, but, always apparent, had its effect with gentle and persuasive influence, which sent the youth away thoughtful and inquiring. He felt, for the first time, perhaps, that there were other things in life than those he had lived for, and things also that were worth seeking; but, alas! the education from infancy to manhood, if education it could be called, had been given; the tree had received its bent, and it was never to be changed again, though it might be blown about by any strong blast that passed over it.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a large dinner party at Mallington House, and the drawing-room was in the usual state in which drawing-rooms are when all the expected company have arrived and yet dinner has not been announced. It is a period of long pauses, and of gentlemen slowly crossing the room to say three words to ladies at the other side; and of sundry other inventions for making

time run lightly when he is heavy afoot, and of contrivances for not seeming stupid when one is anything but vivacious. It is a period when conversation, properly so called, is impossible.

One may talk, one may speak treason, make love, or offer marriage, or any other of those things which people generally do in private places; but it is impossible to converse when one is in expectation of being interrupted the next minute. There was in the room a great variety of the human animal; Mrs. Charlton, now certainly growing the "stout lady," but still not ungraceful; Louisa Charlton, looking as lovely as one of those gleams of happiness which sometimes come across a monotonous existence, like a sudden burst of sunshine on a chill hill side, could render her fair face; a fox-hunting country baronet, a portly man, as fat in his ideas as in his person; his wife, a very fine lady indeed, and all the finer because she had not always been a fine lady; their daughter, who was what people usually call a sweet interesting girl—I can describe her no better, for although this book is written for posterity, and it is very probable that posterity (if society improves) may not define a sweet interesting girl exactly as we should at present, yet will there not be dictionaries of the dead tongue of the nineteenth century! Besides these persons, there were in the room a country gentleman, who hunted foxes during the autumn and spring, and found the rest of the year very heavy; his two sons, who trod in their father's horse's steps, and both of whom intended some day to marry Miss Charlton. There was, moreover, a widow lady of mature years, with her niece, Dr. Western, Mr. Morton, and Alfred Latimer.

Mrs. Charlton had evidently not calculated upon her son's appearance when she invited the rest of the company, for the persons present, including herself, formed the ominous number of thirteen. Indeed, the movements of the worthy youth were not always easy to calculate upon; and it seemed as if he sometimes did violence to his own tastes and propensities, especially for the purpose of preventing people from knowing what he would do next. Now, for the last two years, nothing had been sufficient to prevail upon him to be present at anything like a formal dinner party in Mallington House. It was an annoyance to him; it was a restraint. His character, half shy, half haughty, scorned and hated the ceremonies and courtesies of life; but on this occasion, as soon as his mother informed him that such a meeting was to take place, he announced his intention of being present, and was one of the first in the room. As soon as the guests began to arrive he seated himself by Louisa, and talked to her for some time in a low tone. Mrs. Charlton watched them as much as circumstances would allow, with an eye glanced towards her son between every sentence and every movement; and she saw her fair step-daughter color deeply at something he said, and the moment after perceived a warm smile come upon Louisa's beautiful lip.

The next instant the fox-hunter and his two sons were ushered in; and the graceful mistress of the mansion advanced a step or two to meet

the thin wind-cutting elderly man, who came forward with no slight idea of his own importance, and to welcome his two family jewels. As she passed she heard Louisa say, in a low voice, "For pity's sake, Alfred, defend me from either or both of them. I think they are the two most unpleasant young men in the whole county."

"What wretches they must be, then!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer, laughing aloud; "but I will defend you, Louisa," and the moment the elder of the youths approached to pay his respects to Miss Charlton, her step-brother addressed him in a jeering tone, but not without a touch of pride in his manner, saying "So, Mr. Middleton, you broke your fine horse's back last March, I hear."

"He broke his own back and nearly my neck," replied the young gentleman somewhat nettled.

"Ay, but it was all your own fault," answered Alfred Latimer. "If you had not pulled him in when you found yourself at the top of the bank, he would have gone down as easy as if he had been treading on a Turkey carpet; but he was resolved to go, and you were afraid to let him, and so between you he was killed and you half killed."

Louisa Charlton felt somewhat painfully that it is at times a dangerous thing to trust one's defence to a person on whom we cannot depend. She was mortified at her companion's rudeness, and though she reaped the benefit by Mr. Middleton's speedy withdrawal from a conversation so disagreeable to him, yet she could not refrain from saying a few kind and courteous words to mediate the wounds which she had been unwillingly art and part in inflicting on his own particular vanity.

"Well, Louisa, you are an odd girl!" said Alfred Latimer, as the guest moved away. "Here you declare you wish to be rid of him, and when I send him away you say all in your power to make him stay—but here comes the other brother, Edward, and there comes Mr. Morton in at the door. On my life, I have a great mind to deliver you over to Ned Middleton, and exclude the favorite."

Louisa Charlton was silent, but by no effort that she could command was she able to prevent the warm blood from once more mounting into her cheek at his words, any more than the peach or the nectarine can command its sunny side not to blush under the sun's rays.

Morton and Edward Middleton advanced almost together, and Louisa observed that Mrs. Charlton whispered a few words to the former, which were merely "Will you have the kindness, when we go to dinner, to take Louisa?" which would have puzzled her more if she had known their import than the mere appearance of a little private communication did in the abstract. He bowed his head, with a well-pleased smile, and as the young and inexperienced but clear-minded girl, by a mere casual glance, withdrawn as soon as given, marked his carriage as he crossed the room towards her, she could not help comparing his whole appearance and demeanor with those around, and singling out the gentleman—that rare and excellent thing—the gentleman by feeling and by habit, by nature as well as education, by heart as well

as by position, from those who conventionally took the title, but did not possess the character.

Alfred Latimer was in one of his happy moods. His conversation with Morton in the morning, and the relief which he had received from the embarrassment which seemed most pressing at the time, had raised his spirits and had given him confidence in himself; and not really wanting in talent, though totally wanting in discretion, principle, and self-command, he proceeded to play that part which he thought would be most pleasing to his new friend and to his mother's step-daughter, with more skill than might have been expected. It is true that he took a pleasure in annoying the neighboring gentry, who, to say the truth, possessed but little to command his respect, and who had done nothing to conciliate his regard. He had no reverence for anything or any person, though it may seem a strange assertion to make of one who generally excluded himself from society simply out of shyness. But shyness never proceeds from reverence for others; it is quite a different thing from timidity; and the object of its consideration is the estimation in which we shall be held by others, not the estimation in which others ought to be held by us.

He kept his seat, then, by the side of Louisa Charlton till Morton advanced and shook hands with her in silence, while Mr. Edward Middleton was saying something he thought very fine. Then rising and leaving his place vacant, he drew the young foxhunter aside, and inquired after his black pointer bitch, adding with a laugh, "You had better let me have her; for you do not know how to hunt her."

While he communicated this pleasant sentiment to his acquaintance, Morton took the chair he had left vacant, and Louisa gazed in his face earnestly for a moment, while he said a few words upon indifferent subjects, as if there was something of more importance on which she would fain have spoken. She answered somewhat at random, too; and Morton, with easy self-possession, which is only acquired by much mingling in the world, took advantage of the first of those little bustles which do enliven occasionally the dull ten minutes to give her the opportunity of saying anything she might think fit.

"You seem as if you had a tale to tell, Miss Charlton," he said, as Dr. Western and several others moved away to look at some fine drawings to which Mrs. Charlton called their attention."

"No, indeed," answered Louisa, with a warm smile; "but I have heard a tale which would be very gratifying to me if I had not a warning to give. Mr. Latimer, who is my half brother, you know—at least Mrs. Charlton's son—has told me your great kindness to him this morning; but—but, Mr. Morton—I do not really know how to explain myself!"

Morton gazed into her beautiful eyes for a moment with a smile, till he saw the color in her cheek begin to grow a little deeper, and then he said "Will you let me help you, Miss Charlton?"

"I am afraid you cannot," replied Louisa, "and yet I think it but right to say that which—"

"Well, let me try," rejoined Morton. "You know not yet how much of the seer I am; or, in other words, how much insight one honest heart has into another, and how quickly a man of the world perceives the circumstances of those with whom he mingles. You would warn me, then, my dear Miss Charlton, that the money will never be repaid."

"No, no," said Louisa; "not exactly that; for that I could insure myself, but I merely wished to hint that Alfred might trespass upon your kindness too far, and inconsiderately borrow more than he could ever repay. He is already much in debt, I am sorry to find; and I feared that you might be a loser, perhaps, of more than"—

Once more she paused, and Morton finished the sentence for her, saying "More than I can afford. You will think me a strange personage, Miss Charlton, when I tell you that I lent this money with the full knowledge, or at least belief, that it would never be repaid; and I should be quite ready to lend a much larger sum, with the same conviction, for the same object."

"Nay, why should you do that?" exclaimed Louisa Charlton.

The servant almost at the same instant announced that dinner was on the table, and Morton merely replied in a low voice, "Do you not think I would do much more to save from perdition a person nearly connected with one I love?"

Louisa's hand trembled as she took the arm which Morton offered, and her steps tottered as he led her towards the door. All the three Misters Middleton looked surprised and offended at the young stranger taking such bold possession of the heiress, and the father asked his eldest son, "Who the devil is that fellow?"

"Some painter, they say," replied the heir apparent, with a shrug of the shoulders; and he walked forward to give his arm to the baronet's daughter, the sweet interesting girl, while his father advanced to escort the baronet's wife.

Poor Louisa Charlton! going down those stairs was a sad agitating journey to her. At the first step her head whirled, and her thoughts were all in confusion; at the second, her heart beat so vehemently she thought she must have dropped; at the third, she asked herself if her ears had not deceived her; at the fourth, though she was quite certain Morton had spoken those words, she felt sure that she had mistaken their import; at the fifth, she recollected that Alfred Latimer was nearly connected with many persons whom she did not know, and that Edmond Morton might very likely love one of them; at the sixth, she had quite settled the matter to her own satisfaction, and though she did not believe one word of the hypothesis she had set up, and did believe that Morton loved her a little, and would have been very sorry to have believed that he loved any one else more, yet, as it suited her purpose, and calmed her agitation to fancy that she had mistaken him, she persuaded herself that it was so. How continually we lie to our own heart. Here below, each individual has some eight or ten millions of persons to deal with—more or

less directly—and by the best statistical tables of lying it may be calculated that, at least, one half of those eight or ten millions are trying to cheat him to the best of their ability; but the aggregate amount of lying practised on him by all the men that he knows or has to do with, is very inferior to that which he practises on himself.

By this art Louisa Charlton made herself quite comfortable for the time, and the last steps of the stairs were passed calmly and quietly. She had even recovered herself so far ere they reached the dining-room door as to say, "You are very kind; but I fear Alfred is more deeply plunged in debts and difficulties than you think."

"Perhaps they may be made a means," answered Morton, "of rescuing him from worse evils. I will try to explain how during dinner, if I have an opportunity."

The meal passed over as such things usually do. The appearance of the crops was discussed. Some of the cases at quarter sessions were talked of. There had been an earthquake about that time in the West Indies, and a pig had been born in a neighboring parish with two heads. Both proved very serviceable on the present occasion; but while the pig was upon the carpet, Morton found the moment that he was looking for, and explained to Louisa Charlton his views and his plans in regard to Alfred Latimer.

He showed her that the most fatal vice which can affect a young man of good station, the love of low society, had taken possession of Mrs. Charlton's son; and he went on to express a hope that if by rendering him pecuniary assistance, and thus forcing him frequently to associate with himself, he could obtain some influence over his mind, he might either lead him without discussion, or persuade him by reason; to abandon his low associates, and seek the company of men in his own station. He was compelled to be very brief in what he said; but everything was clear and definite, just and reasonable; with a sufficient portion of enthusiasm, subdued and studiously kept out of sight, as far as it could be, to excite admiration and regard in his fair hearer, and with sufficient tenderness of tone and manner to make her heart beat a very little, but not to agitate her enough to be at all unpleasant. Morton had been very wrong, indeed, in making his declaration of love at the door of the drawing-room; but he managed the succeeding operations better, and Louisa went away from the table thoughtful and happy; and with the fate of her young heart fixed.

The private tone in which Mr. Morton and Miss Charlton had been speaking during dinner, had not escaped observation, and some of the younger gentlemen at the table, who would have preferred enjoying the same degree of intimacy themselves, were rather inclined to be impertinent to the supposed painter. The baronet himself, and the elder Mr. Middleton, treated him coldly and proudly—condescended to address a few words to him, indeed, but affected to confine them entirely to the subject of the arts. Morton was exceedingly amused, and humored them to the top of their bent; for he had heard the report of his supposed profes-

sion, and had done his best to encourage it, taking at least a dozen more sketches than he would have otherwise done, and that in a very ostentatious manner.

Good Doctor Western, however, was destined to spoil his sport, with the gentlemen present at least; for the worthy gentleman could not make up his mind to say or imply what was untrue, even for a jest; and when Sir Simon Upplestone asked him directly who and what Mr. Morton was, adding, "People say, doctor, that he is merely a poor artist; now you know, doctor—" the rector interrupted him, for fear he should say something more disagreeable still, replying, "He is a gentleman, sir, in every respect, by birth, education, and fortune; though he certainly deserves the name of an artist, as far as drawing better than many who make it their profession can entitle him to that distinction."

Morton caught the sense of the doctor's reply, if not the exact words, and was vexed with him; and the evening, as he expected, passed very dully from that moment. Long before the guests departed, Alfred Latimer disappeared from the room; and Morton, who marked his going, entertained no doubt that he sought society more congenial to his tastes and habits.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOUISA CHARLTON slept little during the night after the dinner party which we have just spoken of. While conversation was going on around her, and lights dazzled her eyes, and the siren songs of her step-mother, who had not yet lost one note of her sweet voice, rang in her ears, and Morton was by her side, the delusion which she practised on herself lasted with sufficient power to prevent her from examining closely the realities which she hesitated to contemplate. Let it not be supposed that she really believed that what she thought fit to fancy for the time, was true. Oh, no! As I have before said, she knew at the bottom of her heart that it was not so; but do we not sit in the box of a theatre, and see men, whom we have often beheld in homely apparel, now tricked out in gold and velvet, enacting kings and princes, with scenes around them representing forests and palaces, tented fields, and royal courts; and though we know the men and women to be very humble folks, often denied by the senseless usages of the proud cold world the very respect which genius of any kind should always command, and though we are well aware that the glittering pageantry in which they move is but thin lath and painted pasteboard, yet we find no difficulty in shutting out the undoubted truth from our own consideration, and see and hear and know nothing but what we are inclined to believe—till we have left the theatre, and reflect calmly over all that we have beheld. Thus Louisa Charlton would not know what she knew—would not believe what she actually believed—would not (contrary to all her usual habits) look the truth in the face. But as soon as she was alone and in silence, and the curtain of darkness drawn around, the communing with

her own heart began. First, what was it that Edmond Morton really meant! She could no longer deceive herself—she was loved! It was not alone the few words he had spoken before dinner, but many others—not so plain, but plain enough—which he had spoken before. It was not alone words either, but looks and tone and manner. She could not doubt it—she did not doubt it; and turning her face to her pillow with a glowing cheek, she asked herself if she did not love in return!

Oh! what a tumult then was felt in her young breast; how confused and wild seemed all her thoughts! Mind would not answer what the heart spoke clearly enough; and for many minutes she dared not admit even to herself how deeply, how wholly, how warmly she returned the affection of one whom she had not known a month. The truth, however, made itself heard at length; but then she blamed herself that it was so. There seemed something to her eyes, rash, imprudent, almost wrong, in yielding to such sensations; for she knew not that they are not dependent upon will, but are gifts, ay, bright and excellent gifts from God who made us—to be regulated, not to be resisted—to guide us to happiness, if wisely exercised. The truth, however, on this score also made itself felt ere long, and when she thought of him she loved—of how different he was from every one she had previously seen, how high, yet gentle in his bearing—how noble and generous in his words and thoughts—how graceful in person and in manner—how perfect in all the qualities which win attachment and insure respect—she almost ceased to blame herself for loving, and loving hastily.

But then came the thought that he had never yet plainly spoken his attachment to her; he had but implied that he loved—he had not said it—and, for an instant, wild fears took possession of her. She had heard that men can trifle with woman's affection. She remembered the boy and the butterfly; and the very thought of all she felt being repaid by, perhaps, desertion and ingratitude, was so terrible that she sobbed as if that sad fate had already befallen her. But then, when she remembered Edmond Morton's words on many occasions, when she thought of little traits which she had marked, and which speak the heart more than professions or set speeches, she was angry at herself for doubting him. Yet, notwithstanding that confidence in his honor, in his kindness, in his generous heart, she felt ashamed of having learned to love before her love had been distinctly asked—and that continued to trouble her through the night. Imagination—fertile in ways of tormenting, as well as in ways of blessing—filled her mind with a thousand other agitating thoughts, and kept her waking till the shrill drawing-room clock just beneath her bedroom struck three. She did not hear the next hour strike, but some time after she started up as if in fear, and saw the morning light streaming through the shutters.

Looking at her watch she found it half-past five, and rising with a mind still troubled with the thought that even yet Edmond Morton had not justified her in feeling as she felt towards him, she dressed herself without ringing for her maid, resolved to walk down in the fresh

early morning, and take breakfast with Dr. Western and Mrs. Evelyn. She thought that their society might comfort and calm her; not that she proposed for one moment to make them sharers of the thoughts that agitated her bosom; but there is something in the conversation of the good and wise which—like those excellent remedies physicians talk of that heal wounds by giving tone and vigour to the whole constitution—sooth and medicate even the anxieties and sorrows which are not exposed to the eye. The good rector always breakfasted at an early hour, and Mrs. Charlton, on the contrary, always rose late, and frequently took her first meal in bed; so that Louisa was sure to find the family at the rectory up, and neither to be missed nor wanted at home. The morning was bright, though there were passing clouds, and she anticipated the walk through the fields at the back of the village with pleasure, for she was a child of the morning, and loved the early day. Her head ached a little, too, with a restless night, and she thought of the fresh air and the cool shade of the tall trees with eager longing; but she was obliged to wait for a time till some of the household were up, for she was dressed before half-past six. At length the sound of moving tables from below, and feet upon the stairs, told her that the housemaids at least were stirring, and, as her own habits were early, her maid soon after appeared. She was not surprised to find her young mistress up, and prepared to go out, for it had happened often before from other causes; and leaving word that she was gone down to Dr. Western's, Louisa issued forth, and walked quietly through the lanes and fields, pausing every now and then, with her cottage bonnet in her hand, to enjoy the morning breeze, and the prospect that opened here and there through the trees to the river and Mallington Park. But ever and anon, together with the sensation of enjoyment, came a certain undefined feeling of apprehension. Perhaps, it ought rather to be called anxiety; for it was not that she feared anything, but rather that she suddenly remembered, whenever she paused to taste the calm and unmingled pleasures which had been the brightness of her youth, that she loved; and that though she believed, though she was sure, that she was loved in return, yet the words had not been spoken that fully justified her in loving; and gradually she fell into a deeper fit of meditation, which led her to prolong her walk along the bank of the stream, knowing that Mrs. Evelyn would not be down before eight.

As she walked along, she met several workmen and country people returning to their cottages to breakfast; and from every one, for they all knew her, she had a kind good morning, and a respectful—often a grateful bow. At length, as she came close upon the edge of the stream, choosing the green border of turf that separated it from the road, she saw a little fisherman, some nine or ten years old, casting his line into the water. The boy turned his warm face at her step, and recognising the son of Edmonds, the park-keeper, she gave him a smile and a nod, and was walking on. The boy, however, put his hand to his hat, half swinging round to bow to the young lady, when missing his footing, after a momentary struggle to save

himself, he fell headlong into the stream. On the impulse of the moment, without pausing to consider how deep the river might be in that part, Louisa darted forward with a scream for help, and plunged in. She knew, indeed, that it was shallow above, but a mill-stream joined the little river a few yards higher up, and in a moment she felt the water circle over her head. Giddy and confused, with the green light flashing in her eyes, and the water rushing in her ears, she was rising again to the surface, when suddenly she felt a strong arm cast round her waist; and ere she well knew what had happened, was laid gently upon the grass.

"Oh, Louisa! Oh, my beloved girl!" cried the voice of Edmond Morton.

"The boy! the boy! the poor boy!" exclaimed Louisa, raising herself on her knees; and without further treaty Morton plunged into the river again. But young Edmonds was in little danger comparatively. He knew something, though not much, of swimming, and he held fast by his fishing-rod, showing both skill and presence of mind in so employing it as to keep his head above the water. With two strokes Morton reached him, and catching him under the shoulder, soon landed him in safety. The boy shook himself like a wet dog, and seemed in no degree the worse; but Louisa was pale as death, more, indeed, with fear than anything else. To her, Morton turned then, and, supporting her tenderly on his arm, he led her gently towards the rectory; but as they went he whispered words which were better calculated to restore the quick beating of Louisa's heart than any of all the excellent inventions of the Humane Society.

CHAPTER XIV.

Her heart beat—Oh, how it beat as he led her on! She could not answer a word, for faintness and dizziness had not taken from her the power of speech, the overwhelming sensations which his words called forth would have left her voiceless. They were all joyful, it is true, and in anticipation she might have thought that such words as she now heard must be calming, tranquilizing, re-assuring; and yet, while they made her very happy, they showed her how much she had doubted, how much she had dreaded—they showed her, more than all, how much she loved. Even that was enough to agitate and overpower her, and for several minutes she seemed as it were in a dream. She could hardly believe that all which had occurred—nay, all which was occurring, was a reality. The drowning boy, the plunge into the stream, the waters closing over her head, the sudden and unexpected rescue, the words of earnest and passionate love—all seemed parts of some wild strange vision; and twice she turned faintly round, and gazed in Morton's face as if to assure herself that it was all true indeed.

The languid fall of her eyelids, the heavy pressure of her hand upon his arm, the feebleness of her step as he supported her onward—all made her companion conclude that she was scarcely able to proceed; and as they came to a spot where a rustic bench had been placed upon the bank of the stream, between two tall

elms, he led her to it, and, kneeling at her feet, held her hand in his, gazing up into her face with looks of tenderness and apprehension.

"Speak to me, my Louisa," he said, "speak to me but one word to tell me you are better! Oh! you do not know what it is, Louisa, to see the being you most love on earth nearly perish before your eyes! You know not how one longs to hear the dear voice again! You cannot tell, you cannot comprehend what are my feelings towards you this moment, just saved from death."

"Not now, Morton, not now," answered Louisa at length. "I do comprehend, I do know, but do not agitate me now."

"I will not," he said, pressing his lips upon her hand, "I will not utter another word of love. I have been wrong—I have been unkind. I should have chosen a fitter season; but it burst forth without my will. I will be so selfish no more."

"Selfish!" exclaimed Louisa; the tears rising in her eyes. "You selfish! Oh, no, you are all that is generous and kind."

She said no more, but Morton was content, as well he might be, for he knew her who spoke, and was aware that those words could not be light ones. He might be anxious, indeed, to hear more—to tell the tale of love fully, and to win the kind reply—but he really felt what he had said, that it was ungenerous, for his own happiness, to add anything to her emotions at such a moment; and turning from the topic of his love, he sought, tenderly and wisely, to soothe and calm her; and knowing well where the great source of all mental strength, the only fountain of true tranquillity and confidence, is to be found, he said, "For how much have we to thank God, Louisa, that one who was able to save you should be wandering accidentally by the river at this early hour. How much comfort, how much joy do those lost who attribute—I may say madly—every event of life to accident or some blind necessity. What a vast and happy conviction it is to believe that your deliverance from such imminent danger is the work of an all-wise and all-merciful being, full of goodness and love."

"It is, indeed," said Louisa; "and that you should be the person, too," she added, thoughtfully, but she did not end the sentence, feeling that she was approaching that upon which she feared to touch. Not, indeed, that her heart at all wavered; not that she was doubtful; not that she was apprehensive. She loved with the first full confiding affection of woman's nature; she loved the only man whom she had ever met with that seemed in her eyes worthy of her love; and she had no hesitation in the present, no dread for the future. But yet there was a something that made her shrink from the avowal of all she felt. Were I writing for women alone, it would be unnecessary to add a syllable, for all have felt, or will feel, as she felt; but these are sensations little understood by men. We seldom, very seldom, know the emotions too powerful for speech, for contemplation, almost for endurance; and more seldom still, when we do experience them, are they with us those of joy. Rarely, too—oh, how rarely! especially when the early and light timidity of youth is past, and we are capable of feeling the

deeper and stronger passions of the heart—rarely have we any of that reluctant dread of owning even to ourselves the sensations that master us, that anxious striving to turn away our thoughts from those things thus busy in our bosoms, and to conceal them from all others. But women—all women worthy of the name have been affected as Louisa Charlton was at that moment; all women have hesitated to unveil their heart even to him who possessed it most entirely—ay, more to him, perhaps, than to any other.

Morton pressed her not to say more, however, and after some few words to while away a moment of repose, he asked, "Can you go on now, Louisa; or shall I run to Dr. Western's and bring some conveyance for you? I fear to let you sit here longer, wet and agitated as you are."

"Oh, no, no!" she answered; "do not leave me. I shall be better in a moment."

But even as she spoke they were joined by another, a perfect stranger to both; but one who seemed not inclined to be long a stranger in any society into which he might be thrown. He was a slim man of about five or six and thirty, with a profusion of dark hair and whisker, curled in the most exquisite manner, with a sweet and smirking countenance, and a complexion peculiarly delicate and clear: in short, a pretty, a very pretty, man. He wore a blue coat, rather pale in the hue, with gilt buttons, a yellow waistcoat, and a blue satin handkerchief round his neck, spotted with amber flowers. The rest of his dress consisted of very wide trousers, then in fashion, of a lavender shade of grey, and boots which might have served as mirrors to his beauties, so brilliantly were they blacked and polished. His air was perfectly jaunty and self-satisfied, and as he walked along the bank of the river, before he perceived Louisa and her lover, he rose upon the tips of his toes, as if his elevated opinion of himself required some external demonstration.

As soon as he cast his eyes upon the young lady, however, and perceived from the very evident signs displayed by her dripping garments and disheveled hair that some accident had happened, he approached with a hurried step, exclaiming, "Goodness, ma'am!—Goodness me! You must have tumbled into the water—you are not drowned, I hope. Gracious heaven, what a mercy! But your complexion will be spoilt if you sit in the sun all wet. I dare say you are faint, too—let me recommend you some of the unparalleled Droitwich smelling salts. They have been known to bring a man to life who had lain for dead eight and forty hours;" and, regardless of some impatience in Morton's look and some surprise and reluctance in Louisa's, he brought forth from his pocket, first a corked and sealed bottle, then a small steel corkscrew, and having opened the precious vial, held it to her nose till she gently removed it, saying that she was better, and did not require such a restorative.

"Pray hold it yourself, ma'am," he cried. "I know I am clumsy; it will revive you in a moment—I am quite sure it will;" and, not to seem ungrateful, Louisa took it at his request. But no sooner had she done so, than his hand dived into his pocket again; and forth he brought another bottle, longer, thinner, and wrapped up in

paper covered over with talismanic signs. "Let me call your attention to this article, ma'am," he said, "and yours, too, sir, for it is equally important and efficacious to gentlemen and ladies. This is Mrs. Grimditch's vegetable antiscorbutic dew of jonquille, a sovereign preservative against wrinkles, sun-burning, freckles, moles, discolorations, heat spots, scars, or any other of the great enemies of beauty. It softens, refreshes, nourishes, polishes, and blanches the skin, gives an agreeable coolness to the complexion, against which the sun of India itself cannot contend; and"—

"The lady does not require it, sir," said Morton, somewhat sharply; "and at all events, this is not a moment in which she can attend to its virtues."

"Nay, sir, no offence, I hope," said their undesired companion. "I did but wish to do anything in my poor power to serve the lady; and as to not requiring it, every one requires it: the young and beautiful to preserve their loveliness, and others who are somewhat faded to restore the charms they have lost."

Morton felt inclined to knock him down; but he remembered the barber of Bagdad, and took patience while the other went on. "I did but wish to offer my poor services, sir, either to the lady or yourself, and seeing you both in a—"

"The only service, sir, you can render us," said the young gentleman, interrupting him, as a happy thought crossed his mind, "is to run as fast as you can along that path, past the church about half a mile, on to the rectory; and, ringing at the door, to beg Dr. Western to send his carriage, saying that this lady, his ward, has met with a little accident, and—"

"Oh, no—no—you will alarm them!" cried Louisa.

But the stranger, without attending to her, set off good-humoredly at full speed towards the rectory; and Louisa turned to Morton with the first smile that had brightened her face that morning, saying, "Let us go; I can go now, and that strange man will frighten our good friends."

"He seems an impertinent puppy," answered Morton, "though a good-humored one. But are you really able to walk, dearest Louisa?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, "he has done me good, do you know; for he has made me laugh, when I felt more inclined to cry."

"To cry!" said her lover, drawing her arm through his, as she rose to proceed.

There was both surprise and sadness in his tone; and, fearful that she had grieved him, or even, perhaps, made him doubt what her feelings were towards him—and though she shrunk, as I have said, from telling her heart's secret, she too well knew the pain of doubt to inflict it on one she loved—Louisa answered, "Yes, Morton, to weep; but do you not know that we women as often weep when we are happy as when we are sorrowful!—and I am very happy—happy in all that has occurred—happy in my deliverance, and that you effected it."

The warm blood glowed in her cheek as she spoke, and the last words were uttered with downcast eyes, and in a low tone. They were somewhat similar to those she had before spoken, but the repetition of them was very pleasant to her lover's ear, for they made him feel

that the predominant feeling in her heart at that moment was satisfaction at having been saved by him.

"It was, indeed, most fortunate, my Louisa!" he said, as they walked slowly on, "that I was passing at the time; and yet it was a mere accident, brought about by repentance for a fault I committed last night."

"Indeed!" cried Louisa, with a look of surprise, "I saw no fault."

"And yet I was guilty of a great one towards you, dearest girl," replied her lover; "the thought of it broke my rest, and made me rise at day-break, and go out to wander about till I could go up to the house and repair it. I felt that I was wrong, Louisa, to speak words of love at such a moment as I did last night, when I could tell nothing, explain nothing, and you could make no reply. I feared that I might have agitated, perhaps pained you, and that, whether my hopes were false or true, I might have disturbed your repose. Nay, do not tremble, dear one! I will say nought to move you more at present. You know all now—you understand me fully; and I—I do trust that I understand you. But of one thing be sure, my Louisa, that I would never have ventured to seek your love, if by station and fortune I were not in a position to justify me in so doing."

"And do you imagine, Morton," asked Louisa, with a look almost reproachful, "that station or fortune would make any difference in my regard? It is true I am not a romantic person, and I know that competence is necessary to happiness, but where it is to be found on one side it is sufficient. My dear father taught me to value other things more than wealth or rank—not to undervalue them, but to look upon honor and virtue, and talent, as more worthy possessions—and I have not forgotten his lessons."

"I am sure you have not, my Louisa," replied her lover; "and of you I entertained no doubt; but there are friends and guardians to be thought of too, dear girl, and they judge alone by the customs and conventionalities of society. The poor artist, which the good people here, it seems, give me out to be, would be naturally, perhaps not improperly, rejected as the suitor to the wealthy heiress; while the man of fortune, to whom her riches are no object, would be accepted by the wise men who have her happiness in trust, though the one might be worthy of her, the other not."

"It seems to me very strange and very wrong that it should be so," replied Louisa, thoughtfully; "for, to the one her fortune might be beneficial, enabling him to pursue a high and bright career, to cultivate his abilities, and to advance the very arts which are a glory and a benefit to his country; while in the hands of the other it would be but of little service to himself or his fellow-creatures."

"But, alas! it is the natural tendency of wealth to accumulate in few hands," answered Morton, "and every society encourages that tendency. Such is especially the case in our own land, where the aristocracy of wealth has daily been gaining ground against the aristocracy of blood. When will there be an aristocracy of virtue, I wonder, Louisa? for it is of that you and I dream, my beloved. However, it is as well in our case that, as objections

might be raised against your desire by those who would think they were acting conscientiously in opposing your marriage with a poor man, no valid obstacle of that kind does exist; and I tell you that such is the case at once, dear girl, not because it would make any difference in your eyes whether I were the poor artist or not, but because I think it may set your mind at ease in regard to the opposition of others."

"I must not take credit to myself," answered Louisa Charlton, "for having thought you the poor artist, Morton; for, though I did so for a few days, I was soon convinced that report was false, and yet I think Mrs. Charlton believes so still."

"Do not undeceive her, my Louisa," exclaimed Morton, eagerly; "I have my own views on that point, and have encouraged the idea, though I have, of course, never asserted that it is true. Pray, do not contradict it to any one. You shall hear, whenever we have a moment or two for private conversation, every particular of my fate and history; for, from her I love I can have no concealment; but we have not time now, for here comes the good rector's carriage at full speed. In the meantime, Louisa, know me as nothing but as report gives me out; and let me see what will be the end of the game that is playing; for you, as well as I, must perceive that the conduct of some persons very near you is not altogether natural."

"You do not mean Dr. Western?" demanded Louisa, warmly.

"Oh, no," replied Morton, "he knows all about me. I mean Mrs. Charlton."

He had no time to say more, for at that moment the carriage of the worthy rector pulled up beside them, and the doctor himself got out in eager haste, followed by the stranger of the smelling-bottle and cosmetic.

"Why, what is this, my dear child!" exclaimed the worthy clergyman. "What is this, Mr. Morton! Both wet—but I see how it is—I understand it all."

"Not all, I think, my dear sir," replied the young gentleman; and he proceeded to give their friend a brief account of the accident, telling what he had himself seen of Louisa's conduct, as he was hurrying forward from the neighboring field to save the boy who had fallen into the stream.

"Ah, Louisa, Louisa!" cried the good rector, shaking his finger at her; "impulse, impulse! you women always act from impulse, and peril your own selves without a chance of assisting others. But what has become of the poor boy! He might be drowned while Morton was assisting you."

"Oh, no!" replied Louisa's lover; "he remained struggling gallantly, and seemed to have some idea of swimming, but his fishing-rod was his best friend, for he held on fast with both his hands, and contrived to balance it very cleverly, keeping his head above water till I could return, and draw him out. He is the son of Edmonds the park-keeper, I think; and as soon as he was on dry land set to work to wind up his line as if nothing had happened."

They were by this time so near the rectory that Louisa would not get into the carriage, but walked on, still leaning on her lover's arm, and accompanied by Dr. Western, while the

man in the blue satin handkerchief coolly mounted the box of the carriage, and rode back, apparently making himself quite at home. What followed after they entered the house need not be detailed, for there is but one reasonable way of treating wet people, which was adopted; and other events call us to another scene.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Louisa Charlton went out in the early morning from Mallington House, she believed that no one in the house was up but the servants. Such was not the case, however, for Alfred Latimer was already in the library with an aching head and irritated heart. On the preceding evening he had left his mother's house very soon after dinner to seek his old haunts, and to lose a considerable portion of the money he had received from Morton in the morning at play; and now he sat with his cheek resting on his hand in sullen silence, ready to quarrel with any one that might present himself. The door of the library was partly open, and he saw Louisa come down, and go out. At first he thought of following her, and rose to do so; but the moment after he sat down again, saying to himself, "No, I won't—I should only have words with her, I dare say, and I do not want to quarrel with Louisa; but I will bring my mother to reason."

What he called reason is not worth while to inquire into; for every man has a lexicon of his own, very different in its definitions from Johnson's dictionary. He then rose and walked about the room for a few minutes; and then, seeing a book upon the table, he thought that it might be better to amuse himself with any other person's ideas than his own, which at that moment were not very pleasant ones. There had just about that time appeared in England a translation of Schiller's "Robbers," not a very good one, but still conveying some of the great author's spirit and wild vigor, and that book was the one on which Alfred Latimer now laid his hand. It was an accident that decided his fate; and how often does this happen in the course of life! Let any man look back, and narrowly examine the history not only of his own acts but of his own mind and heart, and he will be almost sure to find that some small and seemingly pitiful circumstance, some event of which he took little notice at the time, has been the key that unlocked one out of the thousand doors of fate, and gave him exit upon the road that he was to pursue forever.

He read—at first with inattention, almost with disgust—then with interest—then with eager sympathy—and every dark and fiery picture seemed to imprint itself upon his heart and brain. The wild, the stirring eloquence of the poet seemed to address itself directly to him; every moral influence was lost, every exciting vision treasured up. He longed for a wild and free existence—for deeds of adventure and intense passion; virtue, honor, respectability, what were they to him! names—cold, tame, unmeaning names. He took no resolution, he formed no scheme, indeed; but the impression was given: to cast off all restraint, to follow out

the passions of his own heart, only more boldly, more rashly. There was a higher, a more intense tone yielded to his character, but nothing was changed. He had hitherto been led—his aspiration was now to lead; but it was in the same course. He had hitherto been willful in his own conduct, he was now eager to work his will on others; but the end and object was unchanged. He had sought excitement in all that he had done: he sought excitement still, but of a more intense and vehement character. He sat with that book in his hand for longer—far longer than he had ever been known to read before, and he only laid it down when the clock struck nine; and he rose, saying to himself, "It is time for her to rise. She shall find that I will not be trifled with any more;" and, ringing the bell sharply, he told the servant who appeared at its loud summons to send his mother's maid up to her room with a message to the purpose that he wished to speak with her immediately. The man retired to obey his orders; but nearly half an hour elapsed without any one appearing, and Alfred Latimer's impatient spirit wrought turbulently within him at the delay. He walked about the room—he looked out of the window—he took up a book, and laid it down again—he muttered most unflial oburgations against his mother, and sneered at her habits of self-indulgence—till, at length, working himself up into a fit of passion, he hurried out of the library, and was mounting the stairs, when he met the maid coming down to give him notice that Mrs. Charlton awaited him in her dressing-room. Without ceremony he walked in, with his impatient spirit chafed; and the sight of the fair widow, in an elegant dressing-gown and coquetish cap, did not at all tend to soothe him.

"In heaven's name, what is the matter, Alfred!" demanded Mrs. Charlton, as soon as he entered; "something must have gone wrong, or I am sure you would not have disturbed me at such an early hour!"

"As nearly ten o'clock!" asked Alfred Latimer. "Well, you are quite right; something has gone wrong—everything has gone wrong; and I must have it put right. You know I asked you for fifty pounds yesterday!"

"And I told you, my dear boy, that I had not got it to give," answered Mrs. Charlton, in a soothing tone. "You know, my dear Alfred, that if I had it, you should have it at once."

"You have plenty of money to give parties with, and fine wines, and all sorts of things from London; and to keep horses and carriages, and servants enough to do nothing," replied her dutiful and affectionate child.

"Alfred! Alfred!" cried his mother, "I never thought I should have heard my son, for whom I have sacrificed so much, speak such words. You know quite well the horses and carriages are Louisa's, not mine. Almost all the servants are hers; and does my own son grudge me the comforts of my home, and even the respectable appearance which I am obliged to keep up! This is sad indeed!" and Mrs. Charlton wiped away a tear.

"This is all very good, mother," replied Alfred, "but necessity has no law, and money must be found, for money I must have."

"If I could have found it," said Mrs. Charl-

ton, "you should have had it. Do you think if I could have procured it, I would have put off my journey to London, when I had set my heart upon going; but every farthing I had, but just enough for the expenses of the house, I was obliged to pay, because those people, the Marsons, chose to fail, and force me to pay the horrid bill I had there. Four hundred pounds at one blow. Only wait till Louisa is of age, or till I have carried out what I have in view with regard to her, and you shall have as much as you can desire."

"I cannot wait, and will not wait," replied Alfred Latimer, fiercely. "I have bills to pay as well as you, and they must be paid, too. Why should you not sell, or pawn, some of all your smart jewels. They would soon raise the money; and you are a widow now, and don't want them."

Now Mrs. Charlton was fond of jewels, and had accumulated no inconsiderable store; but still she thought that if the sum required was but fifty pounds, she could part with some, which she would scarcely miss, for her dear boy's sake. "You are unkind, Alfred," she said, "but to show you that I would do anything I can to help you, I will raise the fifty pounds upon some of the trinkets poor Mr. Charlton gave me."

"Fifty pounds!" cried her son. "That would have done yesterday, but it will not do to-day. I have many bills to pay that cannot be put off. One man threatens to arrest me, and another has actually taken out a writ. Now I will be free of all this without further delay. I will have my debts paid—I will have something over, to start upon—and then—"

"But what is the amount?" demanded the lady in consternation.

"A thousand pounds will do, I think," replied Alfred Latimer, coolly; "I have not reckoned it up accurately; but what between Oxford and London, and this cursed place, there must be nearly nine hundred owing, and the rest will set me off again."

"A thousand pounds!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, and then throwing herself back in her chair, she added, with an altered tone, "You cannot have it, Alfred."

"Indeed!" he said, with his eyes flashing fire.

"No!" she replied, decidedly. "Nor half—nor a third—nor a quarter. There—no more of it! I have told you—and so it must be. You cannot have it, and if you think to frighten me into supplying your extravagance and folly at this rate, you are mistaken. I wish you had not disturbed me out of my sleep to hear such nonsense;" and Mrs. Charlton yawned.

There was some reality in her demeanor, and a good deal that was assumed; for she was indeed incensed at her son's demand, and thought that he had taken a peremptory tone merely to alarm her, which could only be met by a cool one; but she was not quite prepared for what was to follow. His manner, too, altered; his brow knit into a heavy frown, he set his teeth close as if afraid of giving way too far to the strong passion within him, and approaching his mother's chair, he said in a low bitter tone, "So you will not sell your diamonds for the relief of your son!"

"Not one," answered Mrs. Charlton.

"Well, then, you shall never see him again," said the young man.

"Pooh!" said Mrs. Charlton, "you know better;" but without another word he turned to the door, and went out, closing it quietly behind him.

Mrs. Charlton was somewhat alarmed; for though she had often seen fits of violent passion in Alfred Latimer, she had never beheld any effort to repress the expression of his rage. If he had cursed and sworn she could have felt quite easy: if he had banged the dressing-room door as he retired, it would have been a relief. But the stern low tone, the shut teeth, the quiet exit, had something awful in them; and after pausing for a few minutes in consideration, she rose and rang her bell. Before the maid could appear she heard a horse's feet over the gravel, and, looking out, saw her son riding away from the house on a horse that was always kept for him at Mallington; and when her abigail entered, Mrs. Charlton merely said "Do my hair. Nonsense, he will return soon enough," she added to herself.

In the meanwhile Alfred Latimer rode on down the village, and approached the road that ran along by the bank of the stream; but as he was in the act of turning his horse's head as if to follow that path, he suddenly pulled up; thought for a moment; and then, crossing the bridge, approached the park gates. There, he dismounted, tied his beast to the iron bars, and walked with a rapid step in the direction of the park-keeper's house.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was a shady grove in Mallington Park, where the trees were tall and thin in the stem, having been suffered to run up close together; and, as ambition appears even to extend to vegetable life, wherever such is the case, each seems to struggle to overtop the other, and get a greater portion of the sunshine than its due. There was no underwood, except here and there a bush of holly, in which occasionally a stout old cock pheasant would take up his abode, and the wind sighed at liberty through the bolls of the beeches. It was a pleasant place for contemplation on a summer's day, for it was full of calm shade, and if there were any air stirring it was sure to find its way there and breathe more freely under the cool green boughs. Many a winding path, too, had been cut through the grove, wandering in and out amongst the trees, and leaving sufficient space for two persons to walk abreast, but not more; and occasionally a sudden peep of the distant country had been afforded by taking down a tree, which was lost again in a moment as one passed on, like one of those bright fancies that cross the path of thought for an instant, but fade ere we can grasp them.

In this grove, about the hour of ten or a little after, on the day that saw the accident which but for Morton's presence must have terminated the career of Louisa Charlton, two persons were walking on slowly together along the paths in earnest conversation. Hitherto and

thither they went from one walk to another, but never issued beyond the cover of the trees. They went hand in hand, too, and one spoke eagerly and rapidly, while the other replied little but by sighs. They were Alfred Latimer and Lucy, the fair young daughter of the park-keeper Edmonds—a dangerous companionship for her. He seemed pressing her vehemently to some step which she was unwilling to take, and ever and anon she raised her eyes, full of tears, to his, and answered, "No, Alfred; no, I cannot. Oh, do not ask me, Mr. Latimer. It would break my father's heart if I were to leave him without telling him where I am going."

"And you will break mine if you refuse, Lucy," replied Alfred Latimer; "you can write to him to-morrow, and tell him you are with me, and that we are going to be married as soon as ever we can be."

But Lucy shook her head mournfully, saying, "He will not believe that—he will not believe that."

"And you doubt it too, Lucy!" cried Alfred Latimer vehemently; "you doubt my word—you think I would break my oath! You do not love me, Lucy, that is very clear. Nay, do not cry now; you will make your eyes red, and every one will see."

Lucy Edmonds wiped the tears away, and replied in a low voice, "You know I love you—you know it too well, or you would not ask me to do what is wrong."

"But it is not wrong," answered Alfred Latimer; "I tell you that I have had a quarrel with my mother, so that I cannot stay any longer here; or we would be married at once; and yet you refuse, though you have promised to love me always and to marry me when I ask you—yet you refuse to go with me and fulfil your promise as soon as it can be done."

"Oh, no," said Lucy; "I only refuse to go with you without my father's knowledge. You know, Alfred, it would be very wicked—it would be very wrong indeed, and I should never be happy after."

"And so you will really make me unhappy for ever, Lucy!" asked the young gentleman; "for you will never see me more, after I have once gone away. I have sworn that I will not return, and I always keep my word. Come, Lucy, come—go back quietly to the house; get some few things ready, and meet me in two hours at the other side of the park," and bending down his head he kissed her.

"I cannot, I cannot," answered Lucy Edmonds, weeping. "Without my father's leave I cannot come."

Alfred Latimer's cheek was somewhat red, and even to her he could not repress the quick and angry flash of his eye at anything like opposition. Yet he strove to soothe and persuade, but before he could utter many words, issuing suddenly from one of the side paths, Lucy's father himself stood before them. The good man's brow was stern and dark, and his lip quivering with many mingled emotions.

Poor Lucy trembled in every limb, and turned as pale as death; but Alfred Latimer, though he colored highly, lifted his head with a haughty toss and a laugh, saying something the meaning of which was not very clear.

"Let go my daughter's hand, sir," said Edmonds, after gazing at him for an instant; "and never do you set your foot in this park again."

"Indeed!" cried Alfred Latimer with a sneer. "Methinks I shall require to be warned off by some better authority than Master Edmonds, formerly Lord Mallington's park-keeper—if you come to that, what business have you in this park yourself?"

"I have business enough and authority enough for my purpose," replied Edmonds, taking his daughter's hand, and drawing her to him, "and that you will find, sir, if ever you come here again. I knew you to be bad enough, long ago, but I did not think you were so base as to seek to ruin this poor girl."

The young gentleman gazed at him for an instant with a fierce look, and then turned his eyes to Lucy, who stood by her father, with her limbs shaking and her face drowned in tears. That sight seemed to move him, and he said "I did not seek to ruin her. It is not true. I intended to marry her—ay, immediately."

"False! false!" cried Edmonds. "Don't you think every father in the land has heard such stories. You told her you would marry her I don't doubt, but when you had once got her in your power it would have been a different tale."

"No, it would not," replied Alfred Latimer; "I would have married her, and I will."

"No, that you shall not," replied Edmonds sternly. "You are no husband for my daughter, sir; keep in your own station; marry in your own station. So shall she, please God; and I will tell you what, Mr. Latimer, I would a great deal rather see her the wife of an honest laborer than the wife of a dishonest gentleman. I don't mean to say you are so—that I know nothing about; but I do know that you would not make her happy, and so you should not have her, even if all your fine speeches were true. That is done and settled. So, as I said before, do not let me see you here again. Come along, Lucy; come with me," and drawing her away, he turned his steps towards his own house, leaving Alfred Latimer standing in the grove, with his face working with all the unbridled passions that disappointment raised to fury in his heart.

At a quick pace Edmonds hurried on in silence, with his eyes gazing out before him, but his mind busy upon any other thing than the scene on which they lighted. He noticed not, he did not seem to perceive that the trembling limbs of his daughter could hardly bear her on, and that he dragged her along with him, rather than supported her, as she hung upon his arm.

But when they came to a little clump of trees behind the garden at the back of the house he suddenly stopped, and turning to Lucy, he said; "I will not tell your mother, my child, for it would make her wretched."

"Oh, father, I did not intend to do any wrong," replied Lucy Edmonds, with the tears streaming down her face; "I would not have gone with him. Indeed I would not."

"I know it, Lucy love," replied her father, throwing his arms round her, and pressing her to his breast. "I heard a good deal as I came

up the walk, Lucy, and I know that though you have been a silly girl to listen to him at all, yet it was not in your heart to do any wrong—the more base he for wishing to make you. But there is one thing, Lucy," he continued, gazing at her earnestly, "there is one thing you must promise me upon your word, and as you would have God's grace not to do wrong—you must promise me never willingly to see or speak with this young man any more."

"Oh, father," replied Lucy Edmonds, "he loves me—indeed, indeed he does. And I—I!"

"You think you love him," answered her father; "perhaps you really do, and if so I am very sorry for it, Lucy, for his marriage with you is not even to be thought of. I would not give you to him, my girl, if he were the richest and the highest man in the land."

"But perhaps you may change, father," said Lucy—"perhaps he may change."

"When he does I may, and then I will tell you," answered Edmonds; "but in the meantime I must have your promise, Lucy, never to see him or speak with him, willingly at least, without my consent and knowledge—Lucy, you would not surely disobey me!"

"Oh no, father, no," replied Lucy Edmonds; "I will do as you bid me in all things, and I promise you that I will not see or speak with him without your knowledge and consent. You know a great deal better than I do—but yet I am sure he loves me."

Edmonds shook his head with a sad and painful smile. "So thinks every woman," replied he, "of the man that ruins her. If she does not, she is worse than he is. But come, my child; and keep your promise, and that promise will keep you safe. Wipe your eyes, or go and walk in the garden for a while. Your mother has had one sad fright this morning, and though she is well accustomed to bear up under sorrows and cares, yet there is no need she should have too many at once, Lucy."

"Oh, what has happened!" cried Lucy, drying her own tears, and looking eagerly in her father's face.

"Why your brother fell into the river, and would have been drowned if Mr. Morton, the gentleman who came up to the cottage the other day, had not plunged in and got him out," replied Edmonds; and then added, in a somewhat bitter tone, "Ay, he is a gentleman, indeed; but this young fellow!"

He did not finish the sentence, but Lucy Edmonds cast down her eyes, with a cheek glowing like fire. It was her own heart accused her, and she asked herself, "Have I been listening to tales of love, without my parents' knowledge, from the lips of one whom they disapprove, while sorrow and care have come so near their dwelling! I will do so no more," and as she thus thought she raised her eyes to her father's face again, saying aloud, "I will go to my mother at once. I am very sorry that I was wrong, and I will tell her, too, all that has happened, but not now, father. I will tell her to-night or to-morrow. Indeed, it will be better, for then if I should be in any difficulty, and you not near, she can tell me what I ought to do."

"That's a good girl," replied her father, laying his hand upon her shoulder and kissing her brow; "act this way always, Lucy, and you

will be in no danger. To-day you have been in more than you know of;" and taking her hand, he led her into the house.

CHAPTER XVII.

Fox at least five minutes after the park-keeper and his daughter had left him, Alfred Latimer remained standing in the grove, giving way to the vehemence of his passion, muttering vain curses and rash and angry threats against the man who had interfered only to save his own child. "I will have her," he said at length; "I will have her in spite of him; and I will have revenge, too—curse me, if I won't;" and, stamping on the ground, and shaking his fist, he walked slowly away towards the lodge. His eyes were bent down, and, in bitter meditation, he saw little or nothing that passed around him. He marked not the deer as they bounded away out of the fern; he took no notice of the hare that started from its form almost at his feet, and scudded away across the upland, pausing here and there with uplifted ears to listen for the sounds of pursuit. When he reached the gates, he opened them, and went out without noticing that two men were standing at the corner of the park wall; and, unfastening his horse, he had got his foot in the stirrup when one of the two watchers ran forward and laid his hand upon his shoulder, saying "Alfred Latimer, Esquire, I believe!"

"Yes, sir," replied the young gentleman, turning first red and then pale "Who the devil are you?"

"Only an officer of the sheriff of Middlesex, sir," replied the man, "with a writ against you, backed by the sheriff of the county, for a trifle you owe to Mr. Jones of Piccadilly. Don't doubt but you'll soon be able to settle the matter, so we had better go back to your house, where I have just been paying my respects."

Alfred Latimer gazed at him with a look of hesitation for a moment, but gradually his face assumed a more determined and a fiercer aspect, and he replied, "No; I will not go back to the house to beg of my own mother. I'd rather go to jail."

"Oh, sir, I've got nice apartments; quite at your service, sir," replied the officer. "Airy situation, sir, looking upon the river. Do you travel by coach, sir, or would you like to have a shay?"

"I travel on horseback," cried Alfred Latimer, springing into the saddle, and striking his horse with the spurs. The bailiff made a snatch at the rein, but missed it, and the horse dashed on, hitting him on the shoulder with its chest and knocking him back upon the road.

"Stop him! stop him!" shouted the officer to his follower; but long ere the other man came up, the young gentleman was far upon the road, and, galloping on at full speed, was soon hidden by the angle of the park wall.

"I shall be followed," thought the young man, who, unaccustomed to such proceedings, saw in imagination the sheriff's officers pursuing him, like a hunted hare, with a whole troop of mounted constables to back them. "I shall

be followed; I will take to Wenlock Wood. Then let them catch me if they can." Thus thinking, he spurred forward, till passing the cottage of Blackmore, the gardener, and the mill beyond, he came to the end of the park wall on that side, and looking round to see if there were any one on the road to indicate the path he had taken to his fancied pursuers, he turned up a narrow sandy path, which ran over the hill between Mallington Park and some corn-fields. It soon led into a green lane, overhung by thick shrubs and bushes, and along this he spurred at a rapid pace, till the banks opened out, and gave him egress upon a wild and desolate-looking common, with a thick wood about half a mile to the right.

At the mouth of the lane, Alfred Latimer pulled up his horse for a moment and listened; but, whether from excited imagination or not, he felt sure that he heard the sound of horses' feet, and, spurting on again across the common—often obliged to turn to avoid this great mass of bushes, or that rock or large clump of trees—he reached the edge of Wenlock Wood, and, without drawing a rein, turned round to look behind him. He now plainly perceived three or four men on horseback at the other side of the common; but they did not seem to discover him, if of him they were in pursuit, for they were riding on in a different direction from that which he himself was following; and, pushing his horse forward down a narrow cart-road, he had soon passed the outer belt of planting, where the trees were younger but closer together, and reached a wilder part of the wood, where tall immemorial oaks, with young saplings scattered between, rose far apart from each other, some still green and flourishing, some in various states of decay. The ground from which they sprang was rugged and uneven, in some places covered with high fern, in some rounded with masses of thick brushwood. Here appeared a deep pit, with the little shining pond in the bottom; here rose a tall rock or a high bank, bearing ashes and beeches on the top; and ever and anon a piece of green sward appeared in the midst, affording free footing for the horse. To look upon it, it seemed at first sight an inextricable maze, through which no chance traveler could find his way; but to the eyes of Alfred Latimer the whole scene was familiar, for thither had he often resorted from the days of his boyhood, exploring its recesses with dog and gun, although, to say sooth, being within one of the manors of the Earl of Mallington, he had no right to exercise there his propensities for the chase.

Cutting as straight across as the various obstacles would permit towards the highest bank which the scene displayed, he skirted it along to a spot where a number of old oaks had congregated themselves under the bank, concealing its rugged face from the view. The trees above stretched forth their branches to those below, and several clumps of a younger growth stood forward before the rest, making the mass appear, at a little distance, one close and impenetrable thicket. So it would have seemed, indeed, to any one riding, even so closely by the side of the trees as Alfred Latimer, if the eye were the only guide on the occasion; for though the wood sometimes came

forward in bold prominence, sometimes retreated, leaving a deep glen or glade between the two nearest points, yet still at the bottom appeared a thick woody screen hiding the crag. To Alfred Latimer, however, the place was, as I have said, familiar, and he rode along for about a third of a mile without pause or examination, except, indeed, by a quick and furtive glance behind, to see whether his pursuers had yet appeared.

No one was seen, however, and in the end, he drew his rein just at the mouth or entrance of one of the glades I have mentioned, gazing round on every side. Then, dismounting, he took the beast's bridle on his arm, and led him down amongst the trees, apparently to the very closet and thickest part; but just at the end a little path was to be discovered on the right, so small that the entrance was not easily discernible amongst the tangled brambles and thorns, which in that place rose high up the bolls of the trees. Alfred Latimer, however, knew the precise spot by an old holly which stood forward, as if to protect and conceal the mouth of the path; and, leading his horse round, he pulled him unwillingly into the little road, the horse resisting, from time to time, as if it doubted the safety of the way it was taking, and its master bestowing several fierce cuts upon its flank, to prove that he knew better than it. The path soon led to a more open space behind the screen of oaks; and, satisfied that he was hidden from all observing eyes, the young gentleman proceeded more patiently between the trees and the high craggy bank till he reached the mouth of a deep cavern—whether the work of nature or of art who can now say? Many such, however, are to be found in various parts of England, some well known to the geologist and the wanderer in search of the picturesque; others unrecorded by tourist and traveler, and only familiar to the midnight assassin of game, and the still more free speculator in the property of others.

Without fear or hesitation, however, Alfred Latimer led his horse in, who, fancying it, apparently, a newly-invented kind of stable, followed very willingly under the rocky arch; and still holding the bridle over his arm, the young gentleman seated himself upon a large stone, saying aloud with a laugh, "Now let them catch me if they can, the scoundrels."

He then turned his ear to listen, but no sound was heard except the whispering of the wind through the trees; and satisfied that he had deceived his pursuers, if there were any, he proposed to remain an hour or two where he was, and then, making his way through the wood to a village about three miles distant, to pursue his course towards London, where he thought he would sell his horse, and with the money thus provided, and what remained of the sum he had borrowed from Morton, embark for the continent. It was a pleasant and a joyous scheme to his rash mind; visions of wild adventure crowded upon him; dreams of pleasure, not very pure or high, presented themselves to his mind's eye, as he sat and meditated; and there seemed but one drawback to the plan. Had Lucy Edmonds been with him it would have been complete; for he loved her with as much love as he was capable of. It was all corporeal; indeed: it was her beauty, her grace, that he

thought of; but still it was, in some sort, love, for out of a thousand as fair he would have chosen her as his companion; and might have been constant to her for a time, till passion had sated itself, and burnt out its own flame. We must not pause to picture all the sensations that he felt as he sat there and thought of her. The eager desire to possess her, in spite of all considerations, and all obstacles; the wild schemes that suggested themselves to his mind; or the fierce and angry yearning for vengeance upon her father. For that father's feelings or duties he had no thought—no consideration. It was enough that he had stepped in to thwart and disappoint him—to snatch the promised joy from his hand. That alone was an offence not to be forgiven by his proud and vehement spirit; but when he recollected the stern and bitter words the park-keeper had used—the almost scornful rejection of his proposal to condescend so far as to marry a poor peasant's daughter, his heart felt all on fire with impatient rage, and again he clenched his hand and stamped his foot upon the ground, till his horse started back, and nearly pulled the bridle from his arm.

The young man caught it fast, however, and angrily struck the poor beast a blow in the face with his clenched fist, exclaiming, "Will you, too!"

As he did so he thought he heard a rustle in the farther part of the cavern, and turning round he gazed into the depth with some trepidation. He knew that it was of considerable extent, for he had explored it more than once, and what with a turn about thirty feet from the mouth, it might run into the cliff some fifty or sixty yards. But the darkness of the interior was so profound at that time of day, when the sun was over the bank, and the thick trees before the mouth produced a deeper gloom, that he could see nothing. The next instant, however, a voice from within exclaimed, "You seem mightily put out, Master Latimer. What is the matter?"

The voice was followed by the sound of steps, but it was not till the person who had spoken had come forward that Alfred Latimer could see anything through the darkness. He then perceived advancing towards him a short, square-looking figure, which gradually assumed the appearance of a man dressed in a sailor's jacket and trousers, with a striped shirt, and no waistcoat. A black handkerchief was twisted lightly round the neck, and the bushy black whiskers extending under the chin, and almost covering the throat, at first gave him the appearance of having another handkerchief bound round his jaws. His head was covered with strong curling dark hair, and his face was bronzed with exposure to sun and wind, which gave an additional look of fierceness to a countenance naturally stern and forbidding.

At first the young gentleman did not recognize the personage who seemed so familiar with his own name; but after a moment's consideration, he exclaimed, "Ah! is that you, Jack Williams! Why, it is so long since you have been here, and the place is so dark, I did not know you. You have not shown yourself since that night when we shot the pheasants in the park, and were obliged to run for it."

"That would not have made me run far," answered Williams; "but I had other matters on hand, Mister Latimer. I have been here more than once since, however, but you were away. What's in the wind now, sir, that you are hiding here? Tell me if you like—don't tell me if you don't like. Only if you want help, here's your man."

"Why, I have had a quarrel with my good mother, Jack," replied Alfred Latimer. "She keeps me shorter of money than ever; and I have determined to leave her, and seek my fortune where I can."

"I hope you have brought some stock in trade with you," answered the other; "for fortune can't be bought and sold without fortune, as I have found out long ago."

"No, indeed," answered the young gentleman, who was restrained by certain doubts and misgivings as to his old acquaintance's habits, from acknowledging that he had money about him. "I have got nothing but a few shillings and my horse; but that I intend to sell as soon as I can find a market."

"Ah—well—you are not up to things yet, I see," replied Williams. "I would not have come out of such a house as that if I had been you without bringing away enough to live for a year or two, at least. But what are you hiding for!—are you afraid she will send after you? Why you must be of age by this time."

"Oh, no, it is not that," said Latimer, who, on reflection, saw that the tale of his adventure with the bailiffs would but tend to confirm the representation he had made of the state of his purse. "She would not even give me enough to keep me out of prison, and just as I was at the park gates, a fellow came up and tapped me on the shoulder. But I jumped on my horse and rode over him."

"Well done! well done!" cried Williams, slapping him on the shoulder; "on my life, you will turn out a capital fellow. Just at the park gates, eh? I suppose you had been up to bid good-by to the pretty little girl there. Why the devil did you not bring her with you? A man is always the better for having a woman with him; but I suppose it was want of money, Master Alfred. If that's the case, speak out. You were kind to me once, and one good turn deserves another. So, as I've got a little prize-money here, if a ten-pound note will help you, it's quite at your service, sir. You can pay me when you can, you know, and no hurry; and we can send a message to pretty Lucy to join you where you like."

The face of Alfred Latimer had turned various colors while his companion spoke; for he had imagined that his pursuit of Lucy Edmonds had been concealed from all eyes till that morning, and at first he was by no means pleased to find that it was known and commented upon by others; but as thought hurried him rapidly on, the idea suggested itself to his mind that perchance he might make the services of such men as the one who now spoke to him, of use in attaining the objects that floated vaguely before his imagination. He formed no distinct scheme, it is true, but dim and obscure fancies of carrying off the poor girl from her home came across his brain. He knew she loved him, and believed that she would easily forgive some

little force, which might spare her the struggle between duty and affection. He left the plan, then, to be arranged at an after period, and replied, "No, no, Williams—you are a good fellow;" and he grasped his hand; "but I will not take your little money from you, however much I may want it. I will sell my horse, which is worth fifty pounds anywhere, and I think I can get some more from a friend. But it was not want of money stopped Lucy and I." It was that—as the devil would have it—up came her father just as we were talking about it; and he found out all, and took her away. He has made her promise, I dare say, by this time, not to go."

"Such promises are soon broken," answered Jack Williams, with a laugh.

"Ay, so they are," said Alfred Latimer; "but I have a scheme in my head, if I can get some good fellows who don't stand upon trifles to help me. When I have got together a little money, so as to be sure that she and I will have enough to go where we like, I will tell you more of it."

"You may count upon me, sir," replied the other, "I will lend a hand, whatever it is. But no harm must come to the girl."

"But how did you know anything about the affair?" asked Alfred Latimer, willing to change the subject for a time, till he had matured his plans; "I thought I had kept it very close."

"Ay, ay," rejoined Williams, smiling, "but I have been hereabouts for a fortnight; and there have been more eyes in Mallington Park than Edmonds thinks of. But what is your plan, sir? I am no bad hand at scheming, and you are a young one. Two heads are better than one, too, they say."

"Why, I have not yet quite made up my mind," replied Alfred Latimer; "and it requires to be thought of well. Lucy is willing enough to come, and would have been far away with me by this time if her father had not come up; but now he will talk to her, and preach to her, and forbid her to see me any more, though I offered him to marry her at once."

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Williams in great surprise. "Why the man must be a fool!"

"Ay—but he threw in my teeth that I was fonder of bold, wild fellows, who have some courage and some spirit," answered the young gentleman, "than of a set of puling coxcombs, such as one meets in society, and a great deal more of such cant. Now, I dare say, Lucy will be watched and looked after, and persuaded not to come out to see me."

"Oh! we will soon manage that, sir," said Jack Williams, "if he won't let her come, why I would go and take her, if I were you. If you mean to marry her, the fool of a father should be forced to what is good for her and him too!"

"Hark!" said Latimer, in a low voice. "There are steps coming near."

"I dare say," answered the other, "it is Bill Maltby; I expect him soon, and if it be any one else, I will break his head. But you get further back into the shade—you can take your horse into the turning."

"I know, I know," answered Alfred Latimer; and retreating as quietly as he could towards

the back of the cavern, he stopped where he judged from what he had observed of Jack Williams's approach, that neither he nor his horse could be seen, and thence watched the mouth of the den, at which his companion stood with his broad, bull-like chest.

"There, for the first time, a question suggested itself to the young man's mind, somewhat difficult to solve, but not very pleasant to leave in doubt. What was Jack Williams's motive for lying concealed in Wenlock Wood? He had been in former days anything but famous either for good conduct or timidity in the commission of evil. One of the most notorious poachers in the country, though the son of a respectable farmer in the neighborhood, he had filled the whole country round with his exploits, and had only escaped punishment by mingled boldness and skill. Once, indeed, so the tale went, he had been detected in the act and taken, after desperate resistance; but he was at that time a mere lad, and his father's entreaties to the owner of the game, who happened to be his own landlord, had saved the son from the consequences of his offence, though only on the condition that he should be sent to sea. To sea he accordingly went, and returned after a short time, with his moral health, at least, not at all improved by his marine excursion. All these things and many more not very creditable to his friend, Alfred Latimer remembered; but he had no time to carry his speculation as to the cause of his present concealment very far before the steps he had heard sounded close to the cave, and another figure darkened the mouth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

As Alfred Latimer stood in the shadow of the cave, he could see without being seen; and he very soon perceived that the visitor was no other than his dissolute companion Bill Maltby. An unusual degree of eagerness appeared in Maltby's manner as he first met Williams, but their voices soon dropped almost to a whisper, though their words were as rapid as ever. Knowing both parties well, however, Latimer did not think it necessary to use much ceremony in joining them, and coming forward again, with the feet of his horse announcing his approach, he advanced to the spot where they were standing, catching a few words which Williams uttered in a louder tone.

"No, no," the man said, "he is not up to that yet. He will be one day, when he learns a little better."

By this time the young gentleman was close to them; and turning round, as if he had previously forgotten his proximity, and had been talking of some one else, Williams proceeded, "Ah, Mr. Latimer! You see I have got a companion, Bill. But I think he is frightened about nothing;" and he proceeded to relate to the other the story of Alfred Latimer's adventure with the bailiffs.

"Poo!" said Maltby, "I saw the two fellows drinking at the Bagpipes, and waiting for the coach to return to London. You can go back quite well now, if you like, Latimer, for the old

Blue always passes at eleven, and it is well nigh one now."

"He is not going back at all just yet," answered Williams, speaking for his young companion; "but you can go on in safety if you like, sir, for you hear what Bill says."

"I am sure they followed me part of the way," said Latimer, "and I saw some people riding on the common."

Bill Maltby laughed. "So did I," he said; "I saw Squire Middleton and his two sons and the keeper on their ponies. But I saw the two fellows who came down last night drinking a glass of brandy-and-water in the coffee-room of the Bagpipes, and one of them told me they were waiting for the coach. So you can go now quite well, Mr. Latimer; there's no risk in the world."

It needed no great penetration on the part of Alfred Latimer to see that his two companions wished to get rid of him; a very unpleasant perception it is, which is almost sure to prick upon some tender point; but vanity does not always resent, the injury in the same manner. Sometimes she takes herself off in silent indignation, sometimes she stays out of pure perverseness, and uses that as the most obvious way of avenging herself. In the case of Alfred Latimer she had very nearly persuaded him to remain where he was, and curiosity added her voice, for the young gentleman longed to see what scheme his two companions had to execute, very well understanding that they were about something which they thought, to use Jack Williams's expression, "he was not up to." Now, Alfred Latimer had a strong inclination to prove to them that he was "up to anything," and his vanity was equally mortified at being found one too many, and at being judged unequal to any undertaking. He paused not to consider whether it was the wickedness and the folly, or the daring and the skill, to which they considered him incompetent.

Nevertheless several motives induced him to beat his retreat. They were two to one, and not persons to be lightly quarrelled with. He proposed also to employ them afterwards, and it was not worth while to have any disagreement with them then. The town, too, towards which his steps were bent was at a considerable distance, and he wished to reach London as early as possible on the following day. Deciding upon his course, then, but resolving to show the two men with whom he spoke at some future period that he was not one to be daunted by trifles, but perhaps might lead while they were obliged to follow, he led his horse out of the cave, and walked on with the bridle over his arm, between the old trees and the high clifty bank. The man Williams accompanied him, giving Bill Maltby a sign to stay behind, and when they had got a sufficient distance to be out of earshot, he said in a civil and kindly tone, "Well, Mr. Latimer, when you have settled your business, and like to go on with that little affair of pretty Lucy Edmonds, you have nothing to do but to come and let me know. I did not speak of it before Bill Maltby there, for there's no use in telling him anything about it till the time comes, even if we do then; but you see, as it's very likely that I sha'n't be just where I am now when you come back, you must ask Bill

where I am, for he'll know. I'll help you as far as I can, you may be sure."

Thus saying, he held out his hand, and without any consideration of all with which that hand might be stained—and probably the spots upon it were not few—Alfred Latimer took it, and with that grasp received the contagion of a foul mental disease mortal to the better life of the heart. He then rode on upon his way, and Jack Williams returned to his companion in the cave, whose first question was, "What have you done the young cove out of, Jack?"

"I've done him out of nothing," answered the other, in a grave tone, for he was one of those men who, though carried as it were by an irresistible impulse along an evil course to one bad act after another, yet feel throughout the whole the gloom and sadness of crime upon them, who have not that levity of spirit which gives a temporary sunshine to some of the wicked, but who, with a cold and stern determination, follow the way they have laid out for themselves with the shadow of their fate always upon them. "I have done him out of nothing, Bill," he said, "first, because I did not want; and next because he has devilish little to be done out of."

"Why didn't you want?" asked Bill Maltby; "he had money enough last night, and it's no bad joke to clean out such a gull as that."

"He's not so much a gull as you think," answered Williams. "He wants a little experience or so, but that will come; and there's a good deal of determined devil in him, I can tell you, as you'll find out one day. Then as to money, he said he had got very little, and you can't tell how he may have spent it, since you saw him last night. But if he had had the Mint in his breeches pocket, I wouldn't have put my hand in—first, because he's always been civil and kind to me; and next because he's one of us in some sort already, and will be more so before long."

"Ay, ay, as you think," said Bill Maltby; "but you'll find yourself twisted there. His mother will give him money enough when she finds he's resolute with her, and then he'll see us all at the devil; so you had better make hay while the sun shines, Jack. I will, for one, and get out of him all that I can."

Williams looked at him with a grim smile. "You are mistaken, Bill," he said; "there are some roads on which if you take but two or three steps, you never can go back again, do what you will, and ours is one. This lad has already got his feet upon it, and he has got something now in his hands that will carry him on further than he thinks; so there's no going back for him. But let us talk about this other job. When did you say the fellow would pass by?"

"Why, I told him to meet me over at Sturton at three," answered his companion, "and that I would get him a good sale for his stuff; so he'll pass here about two, or a little after. Now you see, Jack, we must settle what's to be done, for I suppose you won't like to finish him exactly?"

"No," said Williams, thoughtfully; "no, not unless he shows fight. Then, when one's blood is up, no one can tell what may happen. But what of that? I don't see what difference that

makes. The law says it's all the same whether you relieve a fellow of the superfluous and let him go, or cut his pipe and stop his whistling. One's hanged for it all the same if one's found out."

"Ay, but I'll tell you what difference it makes in this matter," said Bill Maltby. "You see if you intended to do the thing out and out, I'd better stay with you and lend a hand; but if you only mean to cut the canister, I had better go on to Sturton, and speak to the fellows there about taking some of his stuff. Then I can meet him, and be quite civil to him and sorry for what has happened."

"Ay, ay, Bill, take care of yourself," replied Jack Williams. "There, don't look cross at me; I think you are quite right. There is no use of putting two heads into a noose when one will do. What has he got about him? can you tell?"

"A cool hundred, I should think," replied Billy Maltby. "I saw him flash a five-pound note of the Huntingdon bank; so I just gave him a hint as a friend that he had better get them changed, for that there was a talk of that money shop going. I thought fimsies wouldn't suit our purpose so well as the heavy, and, besides, I wanted to know how much he had got, and fancied such a hint might make him speak. It didn't though; but afterwards he said he had sold for a hundred at Huntingdon and Kimbolton three or four days ago, and then he had heard nothing against the bank. He thanked me, however, for my advice, and said he would get all he had changed before he went further."

"He seems to be no fool, then," said Williams, in a thoughtful tone.

"Yes, he is, and no, he is not," answered Billy Maltby. "He seems quite a ninny in some things, and shrewd enough in others."

"A sort of man to remember the cut of one's jib well, eh?" asked Jack Williams, "and to swear to it stoutly afterwards, I dare say."

Maltby nodded his head, and his companion mused for several minutes without making any further observation. His next words, however, showed upon what his thoughts had turned, for at length he said, abruptly, "no! I won't do for him; it's not come to that yet, Bill; but I'll take care he shan't see me. You go on to Sturton, and have all ready there, and leave the rest to me. You are quite sure of the way he will come?"

"Quite, unless the devil puts his foot in it," answered Bill Maltby; "for I told him of the red post, and of the three roads, and that if he went either to the right or to the left he would lose himself to a certainty. So he said he would take care—that he was fond of a country walk above all things, but did not want to be one of the babes in the wood."

The scoundrel laughed gaily at his own conceit; and Jack Williams smiled as far as he was capable of smiling. Some further conversation then took place, and at length the younger man took his departure for the little town, humming a slang song as he went as carelessly as if the dark weight of sin and crime rested not on his heart—no thought of punishment here or hereafter troubled the enjoyment of the hour.

His companion displayed a different aspect; for, going a little further into the cave, he seat-

ed himself, with his long sinewy arms crossed upon his broad chest, and with his eyes bent upon the ground, and his brow gathered into a frown, remained in dark and seemingly gloomy thought for the next half hour. What was it that troubled him? Was it remorse, or apprehension? Did conscience speak? Was her voice at length heard, or did he look forward to the dark result, even in this world, of the deeds in which he was engaged? Did he calculate nicely the chances of the losing game he was playing? Did he think how seldom any evil act remains unpunished—how rarely one foul deed does not lead to deeds still fouler—how impossible it is for any man to say "This shall be the last!" No. If remorse was felt, it was but as a shadow—impalpable, assuming no definite form—vague, vast, and gloomy, but undefined. He knew not well why, he cared not to inquire, but the sun seemed to have gone out for him, and all was gray. He remembered how, when he was a little boy, and had sported in the neighboring fields and woods, all nature had had charms for him, and every object a delight. The singing of the birds had been sweet music, the breath of the fresh air the finest of perfumes, a new flower or a piece of painted glass a treasure, and everything to a healthy frame and an uncorrupted mind had been full of beauty and enjoyment. But the light had passed away, the bird-song jarred upon his ear, the air seemed sultry as it came near him, the flowers were trampled unheeded under foot. In the fierce burst of animal passion, in the keen excitement of strife, of revelry, or of play, were to be found the feverish pleasures which formed all that was left to him. He knew not how it was or why, but he felt that it was so, and he felt it with regret; for memory told him, and told him true, that in the past he had left behind jewels that the present had nothing to equal, and which the future could never restore—the jewels of the heart.

He pondered not much upon such things it is true, he did not wish to think of them, but still that cloud hung above him, shadowing all his thoughts. He turned his mind to the adventure before him; he laid out his plan; he determined on his conduct—not with any consecutive train of ideas, for his mind wandered to a thousand other considerations—but, pursuing a devious and uncertain course, still returned to the object in view, and then darted off to something new again. Yet over the whole was the cloud and the shadow, and all was gloomy and stern.

At length, rising quietly, he said, "It is time to be jogging, the fellow can't be long first—I may as well have a pistol in case of need. I will take all the things with me, and go round by the back of the park, so as to come into Mallington the other way;" and going into the recesses of the cave he put a brace of pistols into his pocket, a powder flask, a small bar of iron like a marline spike, and wrapped up a pair of thick boots in a bundle with some clothes, and then taking a heavy stick formed of a sapling oak, with the rounded root at the end, he thrust it through the tie of the handkerchief, which contained his goods and chattels, laid it on his shoulder, and walked out of the cave.

With a slow step, and looking round him on every side—for those even habituated to the

commission of crime can never free themselves altogether from the consciousness of being watched—watched by the Almighty eye, if not by that of man—he advanced, forcing his way through the trees, till he reached the side of a small path, which ran from Mallington to Sturton. There was a horse-road on the other side of the wood, and a cart-road by the bank of the river, but this was one of those short cuts worn by the habitual feet which had passed from time immemorial—every day some one, but rarely more than one or two, so that the grass had time to grow and flourish; and very often, especially in the spring time, the brambles would shoot across and strive to interrupt the way, as if to reclaim it to wild nature. There the man looked round him again on every side, and examined every corner of the brushwood and every tree. It was evident that he was seeking for a hiding place, but it was with difficulty he found one which suited his purpose. At length, however, he pitched upon a spot where, underneath a tall tree, had grown up some high bushes, flanking the path. Behind them was a nook, which concealed him from any one coming from Mallington, while to the right it was free from all obstacles which might have impeded the use of his arm, except a small branch shooting out from one of the hawthorns, which he cut away with his knife. He then threw the bough into the wood behind him, and took up his position, sitting on the ground with his head leaning easily against the trunk of the tall tree. To have seen him, any one might have supposed that there was a heart at ease—a mind unconscious of any burden, so quiet and unconcerned was the attitude into which his limbs had fallen. But was it so, indeed? Oh, no! Even when conscience is altogether silent, evil carries its own punishment about with it. The doubt—the apprehension—the agitation of thought that precedes the act—the burning excitement when it is committed—the pallid satiety of the intervals—the parched aridity of the heart till a new crime supplies a fresh draught of the same fiery stream which but regenerates the thirst it is intended to assuage—all, all are the slow commencement of that hell to which the wicked go down more slowly though more surely than they think. He lay and listened for the coming footfalls, and moodily—more moodily than before—he pondered over the past and the present. Yet he thought not to forbear. Why should he forbear? he asked himself. His lot was drawn, his fate sealed, his road chosen. There was no returning; and in the course he was upon, it was but weakness or cowardice to draw back from any action he had determined upon. Such was his gloomy philosophy, and he was not one to vacillate. Nevertheless, when a thrush sitting on the tree above his head began to pour forth its afternoon song, there was something in the sound that seemed to touch him. It was like the voice of an angel calling to him in pity to forbear; and whatever were his thoughts, he murmured "I will not hit him hard."

The bird continued to sing for a moment or two, and as if to divert his mind from its appeal, he looked around, while the fresh air breathed upon his cheek, and the light and shade of the green leaves danced before his

eyes. "This is a pleasant place," he thought; "one could lie here all day." The very idea was a pleasant and refreshing thing, like a fountain to the wanderer in the desert; but he would not rest upon it either; and he carelessly plucked a flower that grew near, looking into the blue petals, and gazing, though without thought of its wonders, upon the marvellous economy within. "How beautiful these wild flowers are," he said to himself again. "My poor sister Mary, that used to love them so, was like one of them—poor thing!—Pooh! I am a fool," and he cast the flower away.

Heaven only knows had he gone on and listened to the voice which strove to make itself heard, what might have been the result. But the hour of mercy had passed by; he had turned three times from the appeal that might have saved him; and almost as the flower fell from his hand, the bird ceased its song, and took wing from the branch above. There was a foot-step coming near; and rising up he looked through the branches upon the path. There was a gaily dressed man—he whom we have described as coming upon Morton and Louisa Charlton as they sat by the stream—walking slowly forward with a sauntering and self-conceited air, looking now and then at the wood scenery around, and now and then turning his eyes to a memorandum book, which he held in one hand, while with a pencil in the other, he wrote something on the page. On he came step by step; twice he paused and wrote; and then he advanced again, all unconscious of the danger near.

Williams grasped the thick stick he had brought with him, the bundle had been cast down long before. He set his teeth, compressed his lips, and hardly breathed. His heart beat, though he would have stilled its beatings; his temples throbbed, though in moments of greater danger his bosom had been calm, his brain cool. It was not fear, it was not doubt that was upon him—it was the troubled expectation of crime.

Two or three more steps, and the wayfarer was close to him; he passed the tall tree and the low bushes, and then a thundering blow upon the head dashed down his hat upon his brow, and laid him on the ground. The bludgeon was raised again to strike him as he lay, but he was silent and motionless—so still that his very tranquillity seemed to plead for mercy.

"I hit him harder than I intended," said his assailant, running round the bushes, and gazing upon him without venturing to move his victim. Then, bending down his head, he listened. "He breathes! he is but stunned," and quickly putting his hands into the traveler's pockets, he drew out a heavy purse crammed well nigh full of gold; there was a pocket-book also, with some bank notes in it, but that he threw down again, and, satisfied with his first prize, gazed round him for a moment. All was still; and he heard the chirping of the grasshopper. Then darting back behind the bushes, he snatched up his bundle; but before he went, returned to take another look at what he had done. He bent down his head again; but now he could hear no breath; and with a quick step he hurried away up the path for about a couple of hundred yards, then turned into the wood again,

and pursuing a circuitous course came out upon the common at the back of Mallington Park, some two miles from the scene of his crime, and quite on the other side. At this time, indeed, it appeared as if he were rather going to, than coming from the spot where the deed had been committed; but there was close by a small country road leading down, under the park wall, to Mallington, and scarcely had his feet entered upon it when he beheld two laboring men walking on before him.

His first impulse was to quit it again, but a second thought made him quicken his pace and come up with them. He knew neither, but one gave him good day as he went, and entering into conversation he proceeded in their company till they reached the bank of the river. There the course of his two companions led them to the right, while his went to the left, for he had already told them that he was going to Mallington, and leaving them he walked stoutly on till they were out of sight; then seating himself by the bank, he took off his shoes and stockings and washed his feet in the river, looked round to ensure that he was not observed, and taking the thick boots out of his bundle put a stone in each of the light sailor's pumps, and cast them into the water; then once more shouldering his stick he walked on till he reached the little town.

CHAPTER XIX.

We must now return for awhile, dear reader, to notice what took place in the wood where Williams had left his victim, as we have seen. The man lay, apparently quite still, where he had fallen, with his head partly turned on one side and his hat beaten down till it reached his eyebrows. The back of the hat, indeed, was quite knocked in, for there the blow had fallen, and it was given with tremendous force. His eyes were closed, too, when his assailant walked away, and his hand remained extended, with the little memorandum-book fallen from it on the grass. But as soon as the retreating footsteps became somewhat faint, the eyelids were slightly raised, then fully lifted, and he gazed down the path which the robber had taken.

Williams was still in sight, but was lost the moment after behind the trees; and the traveler lifted his head a little and listened. Then raising himself slowly on his arm, he sat up, and put his hand to his brow, pushing off his hat. A stream of blood from the back of his head, where one of the knotted points of the stick had cut the skin, followed and trickled down his neck, while his eyes rolled somewhat dizzily, and he leaned his cheek upon his hand, as if to give time for his shaken brain to grow steady again. He uttered not a word, however, for several minutes, but once or twice put his left hand up to the spot where he had received the blow, and seemed to feel if there were any serious injury done to the skull. He then rose, first getting on his knees; but he soon sat down again, with a faint look; and, after a little, crawling to the spot where his pocket-book lay, he took it up, and looked over the contents. None of the notes had been taken, and he

murmured, "Thank God, it is no worse! He has got all the guineas, though—the villain!—but I must get back home some how, and have my head looked to. It's a bad knock, but I think the skull is safe. I wish I could have got a good look at him. It was not that young fellow, Maltby, as he called himself—that's clear enough, though I fancied so at first. I wonder if I can walk now;" and, rising once more, he kept his feet better, and looked about him.

Gradually as he recovered from the first effects of the blow, and his ideas became more clear and collected, he began to feel a stronger desire to punish his assailant, and to think of the means of doing so. Though a fop of the lower school, and as vain as a nightingale—the reader will perhaps demand apology for this insult to its favorite bird; but let any one in countries where nightingales are plenty, sit, or stand if he likes it better, and watch one singing on a bough, and he will acknowledge the justice of the accusation—though as vain as a nightingale, then, Mr. Tobias Gibbs was by no means a coward; and if Williams had met him face to face, although the latter was by far the stronger man of the two, a severe contest would certainly have taken place ere Mr. Gibbs parted with the money of his employers; for that respectable gentleman was the country traveler for a large and wealthy wholesale perfumery house in London. Nevertheless as he knew not by whom he had been attacked, nor how many confederates might be near, he hesitated a little as to his proceedings, and was standing deliberating upon the next step, when an approaching footfall, and the sound of a light air of the day whistled clear and merrily as if proceeding from the lips of some easy-hearted peasant, made him turn round and look the other way. A moment after a man, whom he had seen the evening before at Mallington selling some fruit to Mrs. Pluckrose at the inn, appeared through the trees, walking quietly homeward. He had an honest face—that incomparable gift of nature—but not being of the most observant character in the world, and being engaged with the thoughts of carrots, turnips, greengages, *et cetera*, which to him were as important as the budget at the Treasury, he was passing by Mr. Gibbs with no other remark than "Good afternoon, sir," not taking the slightest notice of that gentleman's broken head, crushed hat, or fallen memorandum-book.

"Stay a moment, my good fellow," said the traveler, considering his countenance and feeling himself reassured by his aspect—"I wish you would help me a little, or, at least, let me walk home to Mallington with you, for I have been knocked down."

"Lauk a mercy, sir, so you have!" cried the man, looking at his head, "and you are all a-bleeding. Why, who the deuce did you find to quarrel with in Wenlock Wood?"

"Nobody!" replied Mr. Tobias Gibbs, "nor did any one quarrel with me."

"They must ha' been poachers, then," said the peasant, interrupting him.

Now, Mr. Gibbs did not see the premises from which this corollary could be deduced; but as he knew it to be false, he did not attempt to refute it logically, and contented himself with replying, "Worse, my good friend—a great

deal worse—for he has first broken my head, and then taken my purse."

"Whew!" whistled the countryman, looking around; "how many of them were there?"

"Only one that I saw," answered the traveler, and he went on to relate how he had been walking along, when he received a blow upon the head from behind; how he had fallen, sick and half-stunned, but had clearly felt his pockets rifled, and had revived enough to know that the man went into the bushes again, came back and looked at him, and then walked away."

"What sort of a fellow was he?" asked his new friend. "I know most all the people about these parts."

"I can hardly tell," answered Mr. Gibbs, "for I only got sight of him just as he was going through the trees yonder, and then only saw his head and shoulders. He seemed a tall, stout man, though; but he was gone in a minute."

"Well, the best thing for you, master," said the peasant, "is to take hold of my arm, and toddle back to Mallington, to have your head looked to. It's a bad knock as ever I see."

"Oh, that is nothing," answered Mr. Tobias Gibbs. "A few dressings of Grimsditch's famous vulnerary salve will set that to rights in two days, and then by rubbing in the genuine Balm of Trinidad for three or four nights, the hair will be restored by magic. But the matter now is to find out some traces of the man that did it. He may have dropped something—forgotten something—for such fellows are always in a twitter, they say—and at all events we shall find his footmarks somewhere."

"That's true upon my say so," answered the countryman, "and if you go afore Dr. Western, he'll ask you all manner of questions.—Ay, the fellow must have lodged in there till you came up," he continued, pointing to the bushes where Williams had concealed himself. "Don't you see, he's cut a stick out of that thorn! That's what broke your head, depend on't."

But on entering the sort of den afforded by the trees they found the branch which had been detached by the robber to give room for his arm to strike. The ground on which he had been reclining still bore the impress of his person; but no other trace was to be found there; for the weather had been hot and dry, and the grass was short, showing no mark of the foot that trod it. On coming out again, however, close to where the traveler had fallen, was a footmark in the sandy part of the path, showing the print of a light and neatly-formed shoe, without a heel, while Mr. Gibbs's boot had left another impression easily to be distinguished from the first. They looked around in vain for other marks, till following the path a little farther they found in the sand at the side a fresh print turned towards the spot from whence the blow had been aimed.

"Ay, he came this way across from those trees and the bank," said the countryman. "I should not wonder if he had been barbouring all night in Gammer Mudge's hole."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Gibbs, in surprise.

"Why a great hole of a place in the bank," said his companion; "a sort of cave like, where they say one Gammer Mudge, a witch of those times, lived till she was ninety-nine year old; and then the devil came to fetch her."

"It was high time!" replied the traveler. "But there is another mark."

"Ay, and here's a horse's feet, too," said the countryman. "There has been more of them than one. Stay a bit, I'll cut two good stout sticks;" and, fixing upon some sapling oaks, he furnished himself and his companion with the only weapons that could be provided.

They then traced the steps both of a man and horse back through the trees to the mouth of the cave, which they approached with extreme caution. The aspect of the place did not at all prepossess Mr. Gibbs with any favorable idea of its tenants; and it was some time before either he or his companion liked to venture in; for there was a projection on one side, which might well have sheltered behind it one or two men, and beyond yawned the dark chasm, the depth of which neither of them knew. At length, however, they mustered resolution sufficient to advance a few steps into the cave; but their search proved no further availing than by discovering the charred wood and ashes of an extinguished fire, by the side of which were lying the bones of a fowl of some kind and a broken porter bottle.

"Ay," said the peasant when he saw these vestiges of a feast; "they are some of those damned gipsies—that's clear enough."

Mr. Gibbs coincided in this view, for the poor gipsies are sure, in all country neighborhoods, to come in for their share of suspicion; and a name has hanged many a poor dog that was as innocent as ever lived. "I dare say the fellow was a gipsy," said Mr. Gibbs, "for he had black hair, that I saw."

"Ay, and I have been thinking," said his companion, who did not want shrewdness, "that he must have known you or some one was a-coming, for he had been lying there in the bushes for a good while—that's clear enough—and then, what could he cut away that branch for, unless it were to have a fair whack at your head? If he had made a stick of it, that would have been another affair—but you see, master, he did nothing but cut it off out of the way, and throw it down."

"That's true! that's very true!" exclaimed the traveler, "I did not think of that."

"Did any one know as you were going along here?" asked the countryman.

"Yes, one young gentleman who called himself Maltby," replied Mr. Gibbs.

"Ay! as bad a lad as any in the place," answered the countryman; "I'll tell you about him as we go along—but, after all, it could not be he who did it himself, for I saw him an hour or more ago walking about in Sturton, and seeming as if he were looking for some one."

"I promised to meet him there at three," said the traveler. "No, it could not be he—that is clear. But I shan't go on now, however."

"No, I wouldn't advise you," replied the other. "What do you think of going on into the cave?"

"No, I thank you," answered Gibbs quickly, "we've found out all we can, I think, and had better get back to Mallington. So this Maltby is a bad fellow?"

"He is a bad 'un," answered the countryman; and they turned their steps along the path homeward.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE was a snug little tea and card party at Mallington, one of those parties which used constantly to take place amongst small communities like that of the place we speak of between twenty and thirty years ago, where the limited sphere of the society produced that fusion of ranks and classes which many people wish to see further extended. If the surgeon and the lawyer had refused to meet the shopkeeper and the farmer, they would have lived almost alone; they could not have enjoyed their rubber. If the shopkeeper and the farmer had excluded the lawyer's clerk or the surgeon's assistant, they could have made up but one card table. The necessities of the case sometimes carried the condescension further, and when the Earl of Mallington was down at the hall, the fashionable appearance of his *gentleman*, and the superior knowledge of great life displayed by that personage, as well as certain little considerations of his influence with his lord, caused him occasionally to receive a note of invitation, which he sometimes treated with contempt, sometimes condescended to accept, as the maggot moved. Then, again, the great expense of Mallington House, and the power of Mrs. Windsor within its walls, rendered her favor worth courting; and Mr. Brown ventured to solicit the honor of her company to one of his *soirées*. The Misses Martin and several others turned up their noses at the housekeeper, and wondered that Mr. Brown could do such a thing; but it was soon found that Mr. Brown's shop gained by the proceeding, and Mr. Green and Miss White and Mrs. Yellowly, together with Messieurs and Mesdames East, West, North, and South, followed his example.

It might be a curious question whether this fusion of classes produced any remarkable improvement, indeed, in the Mallington society. They all met, and they all played at cards, and they all drank tea and eat cakes and bread and butter, it is true; but they all tore one another to pieces with their tongues, if not with their teeth; and, as in most other societies, the grand, though secret, object of meeting seemed to be for every pair to say some ill-natured thing to each other of a third, whose back was turned. *Pernissage*—the gross vulgarity of the great and smart—was, indeed, wanting; for they had no idea of what is called mincing matters. They did not covertly laugh at their neighbors, and in a civil tone either bring out any little fault, or say cutting things with the sweetest look imaginable: no, but they abused each other to their heart's content; sometimes—nay, generally, in secret; but occasionally, when the blood was up, and the tricks and honors were against them, with all the open licence of the card table; for many an odd trick turns up there, reader, besides that which is formed of four pieces of painted pasteboard.

It is true that their abuse was not always confined to each other, but was occasionally scattered about with a liberal hand upon their superiors in station or wealth. Thus, when the name of Mrs. Charlton was mentioned, though she was always called a dear sweet creature, quite a lady, and a great number of many other pleasant names in the presence and within the cognizance of Mrs. Windsor, one whispered to

another that she was going on at a fine rate, that she would soon get through all she had, and more, too; that she was dreadfully in debt, and that she would not easily get another old gentleman to marry her and pay her bills for her. During the life of the Earl of Mallington he had come in for his share, but it was in a different way, for his position and his habits removed him so far from the good people of the town (on whose existence and sentiments he never bestowed a thought) that they regarded him with a kind of awe. People will finger very awful things, however, and the great idol of Juggernaut itself would not escape scratching if its worshippers could get at it. The people of Mallington, therefore, though they did not venture to talk about any debts on his lordship's part, for he had none, did not scruple to affirm sometimes that he was mad, sometimes that he had committed some terrible crime which had driven him melancholy.

The person of all the neighborhood, however, who was most curiously treated by the small tongues of the place, was Dr. Western. During the first two years of his incumbency he had been railed at in the bitterest manner: he was a purse-proud, haughty priest, a pharisee, a wolf in sheep's clothing, everything that is bad; and the dissenting minister of Mallington—for even poor little Mallington had its share of dissent—aided not a little to cry down the rector; but a strange change had gradually crept over the opinions of the people of the place, and nobody now said a word against Dr. Western, for, in spite of human nature, and the assistance given to it by the devil in resisting all good influences, real excellence and the true practice of Christian virtues will have their effect. Dr. Western knew his flock well, was quite aware of their faults and their failings, laughed at their follies when they were small, reproved and grieved for them when they were great, but was never harsh in his condemnation, or bitter in his satire. He was always ready to aid, to direct, to reclaim, to give hope and consolation, to receive repentance, and to encourage a return to right; he was always performing himself that which he preached to others, and his private fortune as well as his position as a magistrate gave him the opportunity of doing much good, as well as correcting much evil.

It may be asked why such qualities and such circumstances did not produce an earlier effect, but that is very easily explained. Dr. Western's predecessor had been a pluralist, to use an abominably corrupt term, and he had never resided at Mallington. The curate whom he appointed, with a very small salary, was a man of inferior birth and manners, of no higher education than was sufficient to creep unperceived into a black gown, no resources within himself, and that sort of gregarious propensity which leads many a man to seek society very unbefitting from the mere want of any other. He was one at all the card parties of Mallington, hand and glove with every one in the place, took his tea snugly with the Miss Martins, and was even known to smoke a pipe and squeeze a lemon at the Bagpipes. Such things did really take place, dear reader, less than five-and-twenty years ago. Dr. Western, however, had different habits, and as every new thing is judged by its antecedents,

his conduct at first gave anything but satisfaction to the people of Mallington. Nevertheless, in course of time, they began to understand, to appreciate, to respect, to reverence, and the worst amongst them in the end did not venture to say that a man whose whole course for fifteen or sixteen years had been consistent in every good and wise thought was aught but what he seemed.

To return from this long digression, however, there was a snug little tea and card party at Mallington, and the conversation of the worthies assembled had received a zest and a filip from various events which had taken place that morning. What a happy and fortunate thing it is for certain classes of society that there are vices and wickedness, accidents, misfortunes, and sorrows, in this good world that we inhabit! What would Mr. Tomkins, and Miss Jenkins, and Mrs. Watkins, and a great number of other people do if it were not for that column in the newspapers which used in former days to be headed "Accidents and Offences!" They would be obliged to remain absolutely silent for one half of their lives; their very thoughts, too, would be still; they would have nothing to talk about or think about; they would lose the two greatest enjoyments of human life—commiseration and horror; they could never shudder at the thought of the man who had had his throat cut on the common, and then go comfortably to bed, after seeing that the door was bolted; they could never blush at Mrs. B—— having run away with Mr. A——, and stroke their chin in the consciousness of not having eloped with anybody. So it is, however, that about a third of the world—I am very moderate in my calculations—pasture their vanity and their selfishness in the wide field of other men's turpitude or misfortune. What a day, then, had it been for Mallington which presented them with the three startling and exciting occurrences of Miss Charlton having fallen into the river, and been drawn out by Mr. Morton; of Alfred Latimer having been tapped on the shoulder by a bailiff, having knocked him down, and galloped away; and, more than all, of an assault and highway robbery having been committed in Wenlock Wood, with the deposition of the injured man, and the examination of witnesses before Dr. Western. If they had imported a pipe of port, and drank it all that night—nay, if a puncheon of neat Cogniac had given spirit to the conversation of the card party, they could not have been more excited or more gratified. Miss Mathilda Martin was quite in a twitter of delight, and Miss Martin, senior displayed that grave and sententious air which was no less a sign of her internal satisfaction.

"Were you present, Mr. Wheeler?" asked Miss Mathilda, to a thin vinegar-nosed man, opposite to her, who officiated as clerk of the parish. "La, how I should like to have been there."

"Yes, ma'am, it was a very interesting scene," said Mr. Wheeler, in a solemn nasal tone, for he had been clerk so long that his whole conversation was impregnated with "Amen." "A very interesting scene indeed! Why, we hav'n't had a murder or a highway robbery in this neighborhood for more than

thirty years. The last was when the pedlar was murdered."

"Oh, that was a long time ago; nobody cares about that now," said Miss Martin; "but do tell us all about this business, Wheeler. Was the man much hurt?"

"I can tell you more about that than he can, Miss Martin," said Mr. Nethersole, the surgeon, turning round from the other table, "for I dressed the gentleman's head. It was a bad contused wound on the back part of the cranium, with an aperture in length about half an inch, through which the skull was discernible. There was no fracture, however, nor any depression of the bone, and though some concussion of the cerebellum—"

"Why bless my heart, Mr. Nethersole," said Mrs. Gibbins, who was his partner at cards. "Why I declare you have trumped my ace—I wish you would mind what you are about. I declare you never play up to one, whatever one leads."

"My dear madam, I am very sorry," said the surgeon. "I thought—"

"But who was examined, Mr. Wheeler," said Miss Mathilda, while Mr. Nethersole proceeded to make his apology in due form.

"Oh, a good many people, ma'am," replied the clerk. "First, the deponent deposed that having made an appointment with young Maltby, to meet him at Sturton—"

"Ay, then it was young Maltby that did it," said Miss Martin; "that's clear enough. Don't we all know young Maltby?"

"No, he couldn't have done it," said Mr. Wheeler, "for it was proved by Garbet that Maltby was in Sturton at the time waiting for this very Mr. Gibbs. The man who was most suspected was Jack Williams. I dare say you recollect Jack Williams, Miss Martin?"

"To be sure I do," replied the lady; "the nasty vermin owed me four-and-ninencepence for neck-handkerchiefs when he went away, but I would have given double the money to see him out of the place, so as he never came back again—that I would."

"Well, he has come back again, sure enough, now," answered Mr. Wheeler, "for I saw him with my own eyes brought up before Dr. Western upon suspicion because he had just come into the town, and changed a five-pound note."

"Well, but they let him off, I heard say!" exclaimed an old lady, with a voice even shriller than Miss Martin's. "I do think that was very foolish of the doctor, anyhow. He might have commanded him for further examination, as they say in the newspapers, and that would have kept him out of harm's way."

"The doctor knows what he's about, Mrs. Green—the doctor knows what he's about," said Mr. Wheeler, with additional solemnity, for the clerk, always looked upon himself as part and parcel of the parson; and in calling the rector foolish he felt that his own wisdom was assailed by Mrs. Green. "Don't you suppose, madam," he continued, "that you can tell Dr. Western what he ought to do. Why what did he do! He set Jack Williams up, and made Mr. Gibbs look at him. Now Mr. Gibbs is a very respectable man—a very respectable man, indeed, Mrs. Green, who would not swear to anything that isn't true. So after he had looked at Jack before and behind, and on one side and on

tother, he said he'd rather not swear, though the back of the head was somewhat like. But the doctor didn't give it up for all that, for he made Garbet describe all the particulars of the footmarks they had found about it in the wood close by where it was done, and he swore that it was the print of a neat-made shoe, without a heel, and no nails in it. Then, Jack Williams had on a pair of thick boots, with nails all round, and two men who had walked with him part of the road came forward, and swore that he had overtaken them coming quite a different way. So what could the doctor do? One of them was Wilson the tanner's man."

"I'd have committed him for misprision," said Miss Martin. "Didn't he get out of the jail at Sturton? There's always a way of catching these fellows if one has a mind, but the doctor's getting old, and is too kind to them by half."

This observation would have drawn an angry reply upon her head, but Mrs. Green at that moment judiciously remarked, "Three by cards and two by honors, Mr. Wheeler," and this being a matter of much greater importance, the clerk asked to see the last trick.

The conversation was then directed to another branch of "the adventures of a day" by Miss Mathilda Martin observing, "Well, it is funny that Miss Louisa should have fallen into the water the very same day."

Now, though it is very probable that not a single person in the room, if they had been questioned, could have pointed out the funny connection which Miss Martin, junior, perceived between the accident which had occurred to Miss Charlton in the morning, and the robbery in Wenlock Wood, yet they all followed the cry like a pack of young hounds, and every one had their observation upon the wonderful fact of Mr. Morton having been the person to help the young lady out of the water.

"Ay, I see what will come of it, clear enough," said Miss Mathilda with a titter.

"It's a great shame if it does," rejoined her elder sister. "Here's a fellow who comes down without any one knowing him, and puts up at such an inn as the Bagpicks, and spends no money in the place. I'm sure he's never changed half a crown with us. It would not surprise me at all if he were of the same gang with you know who. They always have some smart-looking person amongst them. I'm sure what Mrs. Charlton's about I can't think."

"She's minding her own affairs, Miss Martin," said Mrs. Windsor, over her shoulder, with a tender and significant smile.

"Well I hope she is," answered Miss Martin, tossing her head, "but every one doesn't think she's minding them very well; and I hope, if so be as such is the case, nobody will be hurt by it but herself, ma'am."

"You won't, Miss Martin," said Mrs. Windsor sharply; and, exasperated by this little altercation, they fell upon the cards, and played away most bitterly.

However, when the game was over, the rubber done, and the great majority of the party were sipping a little negus, Mr. Brown, the proprietor of the new shop which Mrs. Charlton had aided to establish in the village, drew Mrs. Windsor aside, and held a whispering conference

with her for two or three minutes. No one heard the whole of what was said; but Mathilda Martin, who sat up as near to them as she could, and leaned sentimentally over the back of her chair, caught a few words from the adverse dealer to the following effect—"Well, I should take it as a great favor, Mrs. Windsor, if it were only a part—it's upwards of five hundred pounds now."

"Well, I'll do my best; but it's of no use," replied Mrs. Windsor—"but it's of no use, I can tell you, until quarterday;" and then perceiving the near approximation to Miss Mathilda's ear, she walked away.

CHAPTER XXI.

Up two pair of stairs, in a small house upon the Kentish side of the river Thames, to which dwelling you entered by a door between an old iron-shop and a rag-warehouse, there was a front room with bars over the windows. The passage by which the foot of the stairs was reached was long and narrow; and besides the outer door, was an inner sort of wicket, which was kept always locked. A step or two farther in than the wicket was the door of a small room on the left-hand side, usually containing a turn-up bedstead—an old man, shaved once a fortnight—a young woman, washed not much oftener—and three small children, who generally went without ablution. All the accessories were sallow and sickly; the passage was of no color but that of dirt, and the fragments of a piece of oilcloth which had once carpeted it only served to make the visitor stumble and well nigh break his neck. The staircase was very narrow, like the passage, and there was a coating of some thick black matter upon the rail of the banisters which had probably been left there by the pressure of many miserable hands.

The room I have mentioned was of a tolerable size, and it, too, had the rags of a carpet over the floor. There were also five chairs, each in a crippled state, more or less, with shattered backs and arms, but sound enough in the legs; and a large old square sofa, covered with chintz, unwashed since the flood, and only wanting one castor, afforded sufficient sitting room for three or four persons.

The chamber, however, at the time I speak of, was only tenanted by two; the one occupying the sofa, just before the table, the other placed on a chair by its side, with his arm leaning upon the mahogany, and his head upon his hand, with his whole figure cast back in a sort of reckless daring attitude, as if he felt himself perfectly at ease where he was. The expression of the other's features was very different from the careless look of his companion; it was anxious, thoughtful, annoyed, and yet displaying an effort to cast off, or seem to cast off, the load of care. He leaned back on the sofa, with his head somewhat bent forward, his brow slightly contracted, and his eyes looking out on the face of his companion from under the drooping lids with a steady and eager but thoughtful glance. The whole of the upper part of the face was firm and determined; but about the lips there was a weaker expression, not exactly timid,

but hesitating and uncertain; and yet, if one considered his countenance with the eye of a Lavater, the strongly marked jawbone and prominent chin spoke daring courage. Once too, at something the other said, the lips became compressed and rigid, the feebler expression passed away, and all that remained was the look of a quick and moveable character easily excited, and perhaps easily led.

The other was a very different personage. He was short—very short—but remarkably broad-set and powerful; his chest was deep and wide, his arms long, and his flanks thin; his brow was high and wide, but the back of the head, though somewhat concealed by a quantity of thin light hair that floated in graceful waves all over it, was as round as a ball, somewhat protuberant above and behind the ears, and large where the base was joined by the thick neck. His features were square cut but fine, the eye soft and somewhat sleepy, beneath the overhanging eyebrow, the upper lip short and beautifully chiseled, but the lower too full and the chin too prominent. The figure though muscular was spare, and the complexion was pale, as if with that sort of sickness which proceeds from intemperance of some kind, blanching the cheek and hollowing the eye without diminishing the corporeal powers, at least in its earliest stages. The hue of health was upon the cheek of the other, and there was also a great difference in the expression of their two faces. His who sat upon the sofa seemed to speak a quick, restless, impatient, and haughty disposition, somewhat tamed for the time by misfortune or disappointment. It was easily read in all his aspects—except, perhaps, when a darker shade came over it; a look of almost demoniacal fierceness, which gave one the impression of blacker things being within than at first we were willing to imagine.

The expression of the other's countenance was of reckless, heedless carelessness. There seemed no struggle between good and evil; no hesitation, regret, or care. It was full of perfect self-abandonment, and yet there was every now and then a look of keen cunning, and sarcastic scorn poured out of the pale blue eyes, like a ray of light finding its way into a dark room from some unknown source.

Between the two stood a bowl of strong brandy-punch, to which each helped himself from time to time, without filling the glass full, or drinking it off hastily; but sipping the contents quietly and leisurely, while they conversed. It was evident that they had not met to drink, but drank merely because they had met. Nevertheless, they had thus imperceptibly nearly finished the bowl, and had somewhat heated their own blood, and made their tongues flow fast.

The one tenant of the sponging-house—he who sat upon the sofa—the reader need hardly be told was Alfred Latimer; and the other who sat near him, was a prisoner whom he had found there when the clear-sighted officials of the sheriff pounced upon him and bore him off, and to whose conversation he had been indebted for several cheerful hours, which might otherwise have been passed drearily enough. But he was indebted to him for nothing else; for, sad to say, the conversation of the debtor's prison, call it by what name you will—Fleet,

King's Bench, Whitecross street, or sponging-house—is full of naught but contamination and evil. Did ever man enter there who did not come forth the worse for its fatal knowledge? First comes degradation, the loss of liberty, and by one's own fault—a stain that never can be wiped away from the mind; and then comes the dark, sad companionship with every grade below ourselves in moral debasement; the initiation in all the arts of evading, shifting, plundering. Dark and sad—dark and sad is that companionship, indeed; and during ten days that Alfred Latimer had spent within those walls, one after another, as they had come and gone, the passing companions of the prison had each taught him some lesson of fraud—had each habituated his thoughts to the contemplation of some new vice. But the man who was now beside him had been his constant monitor—had first made him acquainted with the ways of the place, and had afterwards informed him of a thousand horrible antecedents, which are constantly befalling the men who end in the prison at last. He himself was an epitome of all the faults, follies, and vices—nay, I would say crimes—which can be committed in society without actual punishment; and he had arrived at that state where evil "becomes man's good," and he boasts of the wickedness he has done. The younger brother of a man of station and wealth, he had set out in life in an honorable profession, with powerful friends, and sufficient fortune, but the latter had been soon spent, and the former soon alienated. One vice followed another, and with a combination of headstrong violence and shrewd cunning, he had avenged himself upon the relations and connections who had abandoned him, both by using their names to procure the means of his own gratification, and by rendering their relationship with him a disgrace to themselves. Through many a long afternoon he had amused his young companion with tales of what he had done in former years; of the duels he had fought, and the honest men he had slain to shield himself from the consequences of other deeds; ay, and of the tricks and devices he had used to make the shot take effect, and to anticipate the fire of his adversary. It was all true, too true, and yet he boasted of it! Then he spoke of those whom he had swindled, and of all the cunning arts he had used to cheat and rob without being detected, or calling on his head the arm of the law; and many a wild adventure and narrow escape was told between, which, seasoned with wit and eloquence, for he possessed both, and gilt with jeat and sophistry, for he spared neither, were full of interest to his hearer.

The effect upon the mind of Alfred Latimer was what might be expected. It was not to incline him to follow exactly the same course; for the difference between the two characters marked out a separate path for each; but it was to sweep away every vestige of principle; to make him regard wrong as right; to enable him to shake off the trammels which mere habit so often imposes on men who would be otherwise all that is bad. He went into that foul place, reckless, vehement, full of fiery passions and dangerous weaknesses, but with some hesitations and some doubts. In ten days his doubts and hesitations were gone; virtue was

his scorn, honor was a name, and pleasure of one kind or another was the only good.

He had been telling his companion his circumstances and situation; and, oh! how merrily the other laughed to hear that he had suffered himself to be refused money by a wealthy mother.

"Why, what would you have done?" demanded Alfred Latimer, somewhat abashed of his ignorance in the eyes of his companion.

"Done!" exclaimed Captain Tankerville. "There were twenty things to be done. Just write a cheque in her name for the money she ought to have given you; or, if you did not like that, supply yourself from the jewel box, or the plate chest. We should always make our relatives do what they ought to do—it is a duty we owe them. Or, if you did not like to do that, why not come up to town, and order three or four thousand pounds' worth of things in her name, from some of her complaisant tradesmen—have them sent home to your lodging, and transfer them to a fence or a pawnbroker! I could tell you a dozen ways of making fathers and mothers and brothers and uncles perform the duties of relationship against their will;" and again he laughed merrily.

While it was still ringing upon his lip, however, the door opened, and the master of the house put in his head, saying, "Mr. Latimer, here is a gentleman wishes to see you," and looking towards the door the young man beheld Mr. Morton coming forward from the top of the stairs.

CHAPTER XXII.

Morton looked round him with an expression of countenance not altogether easy to describe. There was pain in it and surprise; but as his eyes rather wandered over the broken chairs and tables, the tattered carpet, the dirty blinds, and all the other bits of desolation contained in the chamber he was entering, than turned with any feeling of commiseration towards its tenants, it was easy to perceive that his feelings were more general than particular; and in truth he was at that moment asking himself "Does the law of England really and truly consign miserable wretches who have contracted debts, which—often by the result of accident or misfortune—they cannot pay, to such an abode as this, to be preyed upon by a set of harpies who wring from them all that they have left? The old punishment—if ever there was such a one—of throwing a man into a pit full of serpents, was better than this."

Whatever were his reflections, however, Alfred Latimer started up to receive him with a very different air and manner from those which he usually bore. Both vice and virtue have their confidence: each man, if he be not of a very weak and nervous temperament, acquires a particular sort of courage, in whatever path he chooses to pursue, by the time he has reached a certain point; and the young prisoner had by this time become sufficiently familiarized with his situation to feel not in the least abashed of it. The most dexterous of pickpockets is self; but he follows a very different course

from other gentlemen of his profession, and under his guidance we take our faults and follies out of our own pockets, without at all perceiving the theft, and put them into other people's; and by this pleasant assistance Alfred Latimer had already laid upon his mother's shoulders the whole blame of his having found his way into a sponging-house—nay, more, of all the consequences that were to flow thence to himself and others. He knew not, he had no notion what he might hereafter do in the way of wickedness; but it was already predetermined in his own mind that, whatever it was, would be Mrs. Charlton's fault, from having exposed him to the contamination of such a place and such society.

"Why the devil did she not pay the money?" he asked himself; "and then she would have saved me all this."

Thus, instead of feeling anything like shame at seeing Mr. Morton in such a place and under such circumstances, he never felt more at ease in his life, and advancing towards him, he exclaimed, in a familiar tone, "Ah, Morton! this is very kind of you, to come and see me; for I suppose you are not grabbed yourself; and so that must be your motive."

"That alone," replied the young gentleman, not refusing his proffered hand, but yet not taking it very warmly; "I wish to have a few minutes' conversation with you, however, when you are at leisure."

"Oh! by-and-by will do," said Mr. Latimer; "come, sit down and take some punch."

"No, I thank you," answered Morton; "I never drink punch. But, by your good leave, I should be glad to speak with you soon, as my time is very short."

"Well, you can speak now," replied Alfred Latimer. "This is only my friend, Captain Tankerville. Captain Tankerville, my friend, Mr. Morton."

Captain Tankerville rose and bowed with a cold air, for it is wonderful how soon men much accustomed to the world contrive to separate the classes of mankind one from the other, the wheat from the chaff, and appropriate to themselves that which may serve their purposes, and none other. In an instant Captain Tankerville perceived that Morton was a man neither to be gulled nor to be led, neither to be his dupe nor his companion. Their repelling-poles were instantly exerted against each other, and each felt that there could never be any attraction between them. It was not worth while either to be civil or to be rude, however, and after having received a slight inclination of the head, somewhat haughty and stern indeed, in return for his bow, Alfred's fellow-captive sat down again, resolved not to quit the field without necessity.

Morton cut the matter very short, however, saying "What I have to communicate, Latimer, must be in private; for it refers not only to your own affairs, which you might not care about entering upon before this gentleman; but to those of others, who might not judge such a course expedient. Can we not go into another room? I dare say the man of the house can show us one."

"Oh dear, no!" said Captain Tankerville, rising at this strong hint; "if I am in the way I will beat my retreat. This is Mr. Latimer's sitting-room, sir; and I will not intrude upon

you. Good evening for the present, Latimer;" and he walked towards the door. The young gentleman accompanied him so far, saying something about his conference not being long; and then returned to his friend from Mallington, who by this time had seated himself.

"Well, what news from Mallington, Morton?" asked he, lolling himself out a little of the punch that remained. "I suppose my good mother has heard of this affair—though I did not tell her. After what took place I'd have died upon prison allowance rather than have written one word to her."

"There you are very wrong," replied Morton, in a grave tone. "Whatever may be Mrs. Charlton's faults, want of affection for you is not amongst them; and it is at her request that I came to town last night, one of the creditors, who has lodged a detainer against you, having written to her on the subject, and shocked her deeply by telling her where you are."

"But has she sent the money?" demanded her excellent son. "What the devil is the use of sending you unless she has sent the money."

"That she could not do," replied Morton, feeling his cheek begin to get a little warm at the perfect heartlessness which the youth displayed; but checking the somewhat sharp words that were springing to his lips. "Mrs. Charlton, in her tenderness for you, and in the distress of mind which your situation occasioned, was induced to lay before me the state of her affairs in a manner which has proved to me, and would prove to you, the utter impossibility of her paying your debts. She has not the money; she has only her jointure, and—nay, do not interrupt me till I have done—and that I am sorry to say has been encumbered very considerably in consequence of her having kept up since Mr. Charlton's death the same establishment which existed during his life. Your debts, it seems, amount to nearly a thousand pounds, and it would require the sacrifice of several years' income for her to pay those and her own also."

Alfred Latimer leaned his head upon his hand, and moved his fingers through his hair, evidently not liking at all the idea of being left, by his mother's incapacity to supply the funds he required, a prisoner for years, if not for life. All his dreams of pleasures and adventures when he should have regained his liberty were put to flight; and after having remained for some moments in silence, he said "Well, then I suppose I must go into the Bench and get the rules."

Morton purposely made no reply; and the next instant his young companion looked up laughing, as if a new thought had struck him, exclaiming "I'll tell you what, Morton. I have a better plan than that. You get your marriage over with Louisa as soon as possible, and then lend me the money out of her fortune."

"My marriage with Miss Charlton!" said Morton, gravely, and in a tone of surprise, for he had entertained no idea that Alfred Latimer had so completely settled the matter for him in his own mind. "My dear sir, you are speaking of a matter as determined, which is very far from being so. Doubtless Miss Charlton is worthy of the affection of persons much higher in station and fortune than myself; but—"

"Pooh—pooh, nonsense, Morton," replied

Alfred Latimer. "Do you suppose I have not got my eyes? You are in love with Louisa, and Louisa with you, and my mother has made up her mind that you shall marry her; but," he added, after thinking for a moment, "I should not wonder if she made you pay for it. You know Louisa when she is of age can marry any one she likes, with my mother's consent: but if that consent be not given, and she does marry, the whole property goes to my respectable parent, and I don't know her if she does not make whoever does gain her consent come down pretty roundly."

This was a ray of light to Edmond Morton, which served to illuminate at once every dark point in Mrs. Charlton's conduct towards him. The justice of her own son's suspicions struck him at once; but after a moment's thought he felt inclined to reject the very idea as basely injurious to that lady. Nevertheless he had observed much that confirmed it, and had indeed suspected some design in the encouragement he had received, which he had not been able to understand. Art seldom veils itself so completely as to pass altogether undetected, unless the passions or foibles of those on whom it is practised lend it very vigorous aid. Such had not been the case with Morton, for though no man is without some touch of vanity, his was not of that degree or kind which could make him believe that Mrs. Charlton had been so completely fascinated with his good mien or high qualities as to make him her own frequent guest, and her step-daughter's constant companion, without further inquiry, or some secret motive; but to set up her husband's child for sale to the best bidder, was something almost too gross and shameless to be believed. His countenance changed as he listened, and, without replying, he fell into a deep fit of thought.

"Come, come, Morton," said his companion, after indulging him in his reverie for a few minutes; "whatever you may have expected with Louisa, it would be well worth your while to give my mother a good sum—ay, even as much as half her fortune—and the old lady cannot well ask more, I should think. You would then get four thousand a year at least, and a very beautiful girl into the bargain—ay, and the best girl in all the world, too."

Morton listened to him to the end, and then replied quietly, but decidedly, "I think, Latimer, you mistake your mother's views, and I am quite sure that you mistake me altogether. You will find that, whatever may be my feelings, I am not one to make a matter of merchandise of Miss Charlton's hand; and you may depend upon one thing—that, if she ever is my wife at all, it will be with her whole fortune, or with none. But to return to other matters. There is an easier, a more honorable way of relieving you from the difficulties that press upon you, and of delivering you speedily from this place. I informed your mother that I thought I could arrange the matter, and during this morning I have ascertained the fact."

"Ay!" said his companion, "how is that?"

"The money can be borrowed," replied Morton, "on the property which is settled upon you. My solicitor has a client who will advance it."

"Ay, at ten per cent., I suppose," said the

youth; "and eat up the whole income with interest."

"No, not so," answered Morton, "at five per cent. I would not meddle with any unfair or usurious transaction, and I have told him to have ready twelve hundred pounds, in case you like to take advantage of the proposal. Then, with all debts paid, you will have somewhat more than two hundred pounds to go on upon; and I trust that with the advantage of your mother's house, and the somewhat severe warning you have received, you will see the necessity of limiting your expenses by your income."

"Whatever I do, you are a capital fellow, Morton," replied Alfred Latimer, "and have set the matter right for me a devil of a deal better than Tankerville would have done, with all his wit. He would have had me set these creditors at defiance, take the rules and live jollily upon what I have got."

"Perhaps he might wish to help you to spend it," observed Morton, who thought that such a hint might not be thrown away.

"Take care what you say of him," exclaimed Alfred Latimer, laughing; "he is a fire-eating fellow and has shot several men upon lighter words than that."

"So I have heard," answered Morton calmly; "but I am not very much afraid of such things, and gentlemen before they fight always take care that the persons whom they so honor are those who are justified in requiring it." His tone and look were perfectly composed, but proud—almost haughty; and Alfred Latimer was a good deal struck with an air which he had never before seen his companion assume. "Were it not so," continued Morton, in a softer manner, "every blackleg and sharper would carry all questions at the pistol's muzzle, and men would be obliged to fight, or be cheated every hour. But what do you say to my suggestion? Does it meet your views?"

"Oh, of course it does," replied Latimer, "and the sooner I am out of this cursed place the better. I declare the room stinks of broken mahogany."

"Rum-punch and cigars," added Morton, with a faint smile. "However, you cannot quit it to-night, I fear. To-morrow we must get you bail for a few days; and then I will leave you to settle the rest with my solicitor, for I have business that calls me back to Mallington."

"What, you have not done sketching the whole neighborhood?" said Alfred Latimer, with a gay laugh, "but I shall join you there, as soon as all is signed, sealed, and delivered; for I have some sketches to take, too—of objects as pretty to my eyes, at least."

Morton was silent, for the words of Alfred Latimer might have more senses than one; but he could hardly venture to take them in one honorable to the speaker; for he had heard from but too good authority that at Mallington Mrs. Charlton's son showed a more marked dislike to the society of women in his own rank of life than even to that of men. "God grant," he said at length, somewhat abruptly, "that some honorable attachment may bring and fix you there. It would be the very best thing for you. However, I will direct my solicitor to

find you bail, and will be with you about twelve to take you to his office. So good morning to you, Latimer."

They shook hands, and Morton departed, leaving Alfred Latimer standing in the middle of the room, in a deep fit of thought. What was his mind revolving so earnestly? Did he feel grateful for the kindness he received? Was he touched by the interest taken in his fate? Was he busy with good resolutions for the future? Alas! no. His first question to himself was, "Who the devil can this fellow be? He speaks as if he were the Prince of Wales. A poor painter!—I wonder my mother can be such a gull. I should not wonder if he were the son of some rich East Indian, who has smothered a Begum, and brought over her money chests. It's a capital country that India. One can do very nearly what one likes there, and knock about the black fellows at pleasure. I should like to set up sultan somewhere, and have a seraglio," and laughing at his own thoughts, he went down to the room below, and called up Tankerville to spend the rest of the night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In a street not far from the inns of court, though not exactly within their solemn precincts—a little more airy and cheerful than those dark recesses of the law, and not quite so much imbued with the odor of parchment and black gowns, but still smelling strong of red tape and blue bags—were numerous houses inhabited by solicitors, whose doors, like those of a place to which in some respects they bear a considerable resemblance (inasmuch as those who once get into them have a difficulty in getting out again, and are pretty well tormented while they are in) stand ever open to receive the poor sinners whom fate or folly lead to enter. One of the best houses in this street, and one of the cleanest, was number forty-three, about the middle of the row on the right hand; but yet the passage by which one entered would have puzzled *Œdipus* if the Sphinx had asked when it was washed; and in the midst, just beyond a large door-mat, which appeared to have been placed there to prevent people from carrying any of the dirt away with them, there was—nay, there is, for it is impossible it can have been removed—a large black stain of ink which must have been spilt nearly at the same time as the blood of David Rizzio on the floor of sad Holyrood, that storehouse of tragedies. At about ten o'clock on the morning succeeding the day of Morton's visit to Alfred Latimer, a gentleman mounted on a handsome bay horse, very glossy in the skin and full of blood and power—though by no means a catlike prancer of the parks—stopped at the door of number forty-three, and instantly a groom rode up to take his rein.

Dismounting slowly and thoughtfully he entered the passage, and walked on to a room which had a glass door, with brass rods across the panes, at the end; and opening the said door he found himself in the presence of eight or nine clerks, shut up in boxes or pens. He was not the least abashed, however, and when

the head common-law clerk advanced from the stall, with a sweet smile and a low bow, the gentleman only inquired whether Mr. Quatterly had yet arrived!

The clerk assured him that Mr. Quatterly had been there for an hour; and, without more ado, Mr. Morton, for he it was, walked up the stairs, and opened a door on the first floor to the left. Within was another door covered with green baize, impervious to wind and sound, and it also opened under the young gentleman's hand, disclosing a neat and comfortable room within, ornamented with a large table, covered over with innumerable packets of papers, all tied up and labelled; a large book-case, filled with books, in brown calf, all looking so like each other that they might have been taken for one family; and an elderly gentleman, besides sundry chairs and a lamp, the flame of which, like that on Vesta's altar, was kept ever burning by certain virgins, who lived in the penetralia of the temple. We will pass over the chairs, and of the book-case and the table we have said enough; but with regard to the elderly gentleman we must have a word or two more, for he was worthy remark to any one, and we may have to relate some of his proceedings hereafter. It is of his person, however, that we have now to speak. Mr. Quatterly, or, as his letters generally bore his style and title, Timothy Quatterly, Esquire, had passed his meridian by several years, being now fifty-eight if not fifty-nine. To see him sitting one would have said he was six foot high; to see him standing one soon perceived that he was not more than five foot seven. The upper part was large, round, and bulky; the lower part minute enough to make an almost ludicrous contrast with the rest. Nature, in fact, having been called in a hurry from South America, had brought the superstructure of an unfinished Patagonian with her, and lighting down in Lapland had clapped it on to the legs of a dwarf. This disproportion, as we shall soon have to show, affected both mind and body; but first let us look at his face, reader. See how round, and smooth, and almost soft it seems, with its rosy cheeks and its little nose. Gibbon himself, notwithstanding Madame de Defland's terrible mistake, had never such a pair of cheeks as that; and then those merry little twinkling black eyes, with something both of high manly sagacity in them and of childlike fun, how they peep out from under the thin eyebrows. You see he is as bald too as a haddock, except just over the ears, and in the fat back of his neck, where the gray hair flows away in a pigtail. He is a stout man, too—rather too stout, inclined to be a little corpulent, yet active, too—as active as a trout. Then his clothing is somewhat peculiar; a black coat powdered on the collar, a neckerchief as white as snow—once every morning, upon my word; a white waist-coat without a speck, though somewhat yellowish, from London washing; but those drab knee-breeches, and those gray worsted stockings!—surely that is not in keeping, Mr. Quatterly. But perhaps he may consider his legs unworthy of their trunk, and treat them accordingly; or is it that from their littleness he regards them more tenderly, and wraps them in all that is warmest. That is probably the right solution of the enigma; and

I declare the man has got a pair of silver buckles in his small shoes.

Such was, such is Timothy Quatterly, Esq., in outward appearance; and in mind there are peculiarities also. That large head contains a vast quantity of law, and a good deal of mirth—gay, simple, almost infantine fun. There is shrewd good sense, too, within. He is not a man to be taken in, to be cheated, bamboozled, done; and yet he is as good-humored a creature as any upon earth—ay, and benevolent too, notwithstanding his being a lawyer. In fact, he is a *lucus à lucra*; for, what with erudition, law, merriment, good-nature, kindness of heart, keenness of mind, activity, shoulders, and legs, there is quite enough of him to make two men, and very tolerable men too.

But he was somewhat wayward in his whims; and though he could occasionally show that he was possessed of wit that would have shamed many a practised compounder of smart sayings, yet he was fond of a pun—barbarously fond of a pun; and let it be remarked that we use the word barbarously discreetly, and with due reverence; for though no barbarians that have ever yet been heard of were known to love that peculiar sort of tea-and-toast witticism called a pun, being always very acetate and serious people, and much more reasonable than civilized nations, yet they have a spice of cruelty in them, and so had Mr. Quatterly; for no sooner did he discover that any piousness and magniloquent man, who fancied his grave sayings were worthy of profound attention, hated a pun, especially uttered by another man, than he set upon him, and with an overpowering torrent of the abhorred jest overwhelmed his stories, broke through his arguments, swamped his conclusions, and turned all his eloquence to farce. There was no resisting him, for resistance only increased his cruelty and his fluency. With other persons he was more moderate; and in conversation with any one who did not rouse the spirit of perversity within him, but smiled at even a stale jest, or far-fetched illustration, he would be tender-hearted, and content himself with shadowing forth his meaning, when he did not choose to speak it plainly, with many a nursery rhyme, or schoolboy joke, always brought in quaintly, and sometimes, in its very simplicity, judiciously. Thus there seemed two parts in his mind as well as in his body—one full of power, activity, and vigor, erudite, keen, perspicuous, and resolute; the other playful, gay, malicious, and full of fun, but, like his little legs, carrying all the rest lightly over various slippery and uneven paths.

Such was the gentleman in whose presence Mr. Morton now appeared, and when the latter entered the room Mr. Quatterly was sitting with the worsted stocking on his right leg crossed over the knee of the drab breeches on his left leg, his index digit of the dexter hand rubbing a spot upon the top of his head, which, if not more bald, was at least more polished than the rest, and, looking steadily at the shagreen case of a pair of spectacles which lay upon the table before him.

"Ah! good morning, sir; good morning," he said, as soon as he beheld Morton, whom, for various reasons to himself best known, he treated with great respect, at the same time rising

and putting a chair for him, though, as he moved about with a light step, he seemed so top-heavy that it was hardly possible not to think every moment that he would topple over.

"He seated, my dear sir, be seated. What news of his majesty's country seat in Surrey? You saw your lost mutton, I suppose, last night. Pray, did you find him shorn to your hand, as, according to all rules—and those of the King's Bench, especially—he ought to be, though the fleece of those who get in there one would think were hardly worth plucking."

"There are always persons quite ready, my dear sir," replied Morton, with a smile, "to gather up the gleanings that more legitimate husbandmen have let fall."

"A cut at the lawyers? A cut at the lawyers, sir," cried Mr. Quatterly: "that's unkind; that's unfair. '*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus*.' It takes five years to make an attorney, hey! I know what you mean. But, pray, do not call us all husbandmen. I have nothing of the husband in me, though I think I know some one who has;—ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

There was a merriment, a joviality in his laugh that was not to be resisted; and Morton joined in somewhat more quietly, adding, as soon as the cackination of the lawyer would allow of his being heard—"But, my good friend, have you got the deed prepared as far as possible, for I would fain have it settled at once."

"Settled!" said the solicitor, "he is thinking of the settlements already. How these young men's wits do get inflamed with matrimony as soon as the spark is blown into a blaze—that's not a pun, mind you—it's a fine flight of imagination beautifully expressed; for though you may be a spark, and a gay spark too, yet you have not shown yourself easily fanned into the necessary state of combustion."

"But an answer, an answer, my dear sir," said Morton; "have you got these deeds, or this deed ready, as far as may be, for I much wish to carry the young man out of the temptations of London as soon as may be."

"Pooh! leave him alone, and he'll come home, and most likely bring a fat tail behind him," answered the lawyer, having recourse to one of his favorite illustrations. "The temptations of London! Did ever one hear a sane man talk of such things. I never found any temptation in London. All mine have been in the country. By the way, I hope you have thought of me this year. I must have a pop at the birds, and you, or your late good father, have always provided me."

"Oh, yes!" replied Morton, "you shall have enough. Come down to me at Mallington, and I will give you enough to do."

"To draw the settlement, hey!" cried Mr. Quatterly, with a new burst of laughter; "but from what I hear, you have already bagged the best of the game there before the season, you poacher. But I'll come, and if I leave you a single cock pheasant, my name's not Quatterly. Can draw the settlements after dinner, fall asleep over them, send them up to Bell, get an opinion that nobody on earth can read, and leave a whole generation of law-suits for the benefit of my clerks and their children. Must take care of the poor boys in the office, you know. But

come, I see you are impatient. Now to business. What does the young fellow say? That is the first question. I have known young dogs so fond of that kennel, that nothing would get them out of it, and there is no use of drawing deeds unless one is sure they will be signed."

"But, my dear sir, I told you I was sure," replied Morton, in a tone of vexation at the idea of the matter being no farther advanced than it was the night before; "he will sign it willingly—he was transported at the very idea."

"No, no, no—not transported yet!" cried Mr. Quatterly; "soon maybe, for aught you or I know. He's on the high road, it would seem; and taking the high road is one step to transportation, if not to the gallows. He's in a sponging-house, I think you said. No fear of his not being well cleaned out then, and fit for whitewashing. Had he got any one with him?—a poor parson who had spent too much in gin-and-water, and seven children, or anything of that sort; or a maiden lady of nine-and-thirty, who had been ruined by lawyers and *sal volatile*? Those are the sort of companions that make a man transported to get out."

"No, indeed," answered Morton; "he had with him one Captain Tankerville, a very dangerous person, I believe. Was he not once brought up on suspicion of forgery?"

"Oh, the villain!" cried Mr. Quatterly; "if he's in, it is, indeed, high time to get the other out. If he carried in with him a single virtue, or a half-crown piece, that fellow will pick his pocket of it. But to set your mind at ease, I sat up last night for half an hour, and drew up a little memorandum, as good as a deed, which one of the clerks is just now writing out. It will be done before twelve, and you can pack him up in a hamper as soon as it is signed, and send him off to Mallington by the night coach, taking care to put him in head foremost, and write upon the top, 'Keep this side up!' It is his only chance of having his brain turned right again."

"But, my good friend, we must contrive to get bail for him before I can bring him here," said Morton.

"Why, bail him yourself, or bring him in the sheriff's custody," said Mr. Quatterly. "My name will make them all compliance; but, I forgot—your mystery—your mystery!—and, methinks, you forgot too. If you come with him here, you will have your name shouted from clerk to clerk to split the welkin. That will never do. Let me see;" and turning to a book with two brass clasps, he read: "Mr. Twistleton at eleven—Johnny Dunmow at three—Sir Arthur McMore at half-past. Well, I can go to him at half-past eleven, for Twistleton only wants to borrow fifteen thousand pounds on a mortgage in the moon. That's a property easily conveyed, so he will not keep me long, and then I can go to the lad myself. You can meet me there, for he might prove refractory about leaving me to settle with the creditors, and then, as in the ring, it is as well to have a backer."

"But he cannot get out without the creditors being paid, or having security," replied Morton.

"Oh, people get out wonderfully," answered Mr. Quatterly; "and as to security, there is nothing so safe as a hackney coach and a ten pound note, though one sometimes breaks down,

and the others turn out forged. However, it is as well not to bail him at all, for then he must either both sign and pay, or remain where he is, but you will never get your money, I can tell you; or, at all events, not the interest, for his mother has the property for life, and till she assigns it to him his signature is not worth one of those old buckles;" and he stretched out his foot, a little pleased at its neat appearance.

"The loss will not be great," replied Morton, in a well-satisfied tone, "and I shall be well satisfied if we succeed in rescuing him."

"And winning the fair lady," added Mr. Quatterly. "Well, Tommy Tucker turned a Turk for twopence; and, after all, it's a much more sensible thing to turn tomfool for a pretty girl; though, doubtless, the said Thomas Tucker, who turned Turk as aforesaid, looked to have a reversionary interest in certain Circassians of which his convertor was seized and possessed, as well as the mere consideration money of twopence of lawful money of Great Britain—anything hereinbefore contained to the contrary notwithstanding—and so good bye till a quarter to twelve."

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALFRED LATIMER and his dear now-found friend, Captain Tankerville, sat at their breakfast at about eleven o'clock, and the table was covered in a way that the drawing-room of the sponging-house seldom saw. What a curious sensation that very collocation "drawing-room—of a sponging-house" gives. Perhaps nothing on earth brings forth the painful points in any painful subject more than when some image is accidentally combined with it to which we have been accustomed to attach ideas of pleasure. The drawing-room of a sponging-house! The drawing-room of a prison! The place where we have been accustomed to spend pleasant hours, to which we retire from care and business and anxiety, to enjoy our allotted portion of relaxation with those most dear to us, in which we have seen ourselves surrounded by children and friends and happy faces—the name of that place connected with a prison!—with suffering and sorrow, and want and captivity! What a contrast in that strange combination! However, there they sat at a meal which certainly did not consist of ordinary prisoners' fare; for the money which Latimer had got for his horse was not yet gone; and with the true spirit of his class of men, he thought that as he was soon to be free, and have somewhat more than two hundred pounds in his pocket, it mattered not how speedily the sum he had was spent. He had therefore invited Captain Tankerville to breakfast, and had ordered and paid for all sorts of things—broiled ham and fish, coffee and tea, muffins and rolls, sweatmeats and honey. The cerberus of the house, at the first mention of his wants and wishes, had divined, from long experience, that the gentleman who had visited his prisoner the night before had come to announce his speedy liberation, and consequently determined to make the most of his time. He got everything that was required, therefore, with great promptitude, and charged him three times the value

for all. Never were such dear eggs set down upon a table; never did York or Westphalia produce such extravagant ham; never did a fishmonger ask such a price for fish. But it was then, and is in a degree now, a part of the law of England that all its officials should have a privilege of skinning the unfortunate, and trading in the follies of the foolish. It may be a good part of the law, but I do not see the morality thereof quite clearly.

However, there they sat, laughing and talking, jesting and jeering, enjoying themselves as if folly and crime were the merriest things in the world. How different was the scene from that which I remember once having beheld when I went to visit a poor friend in one of those dens of horror and iniquity. He was a high and noble minded man of talent and imagination—unfortunate, but neither vicious nor foolish; and I never shall forget the haggard and despairing look of his countenance as he sat there solitary and silent, taken from his wife and children, deprived of the means of earning the very sum that was necessary to pay a hard creditor. What was the cause why he could not be as gay as Alfred Latimer and Captain Tankerville? It is explained in a moment. He was brought there by no fault of his own—they were. He had been arrested at the suit of a surgeon for long attendance on a sick child, which he had been unable to pay because other people could not pay him. This was his crime—none other upon earth. Thou art a hard thing, O Law of England, and in thy justice art often marvelously unjust—in thine equity iniquitous. The cunning rogue sets thee at defiance; but honest poverty is a crime that cannot escape thee.

Alfred Latimer had told his evil counsellor almost all that had taken place between him and Mr. Morton. He had not, indeed, told all, for Louisa's name had never been mentioned. There was something so pure, so sweet, so good in the very idea of the sister of his boyhood that, bad as he was, and hardened as he was growing, he shrunk from the very mention of her existence in the presence of one whom he instinctively felt to be coarse in mind and gross in habit of thought. However sweetly the cup of wickedness may be seasoned, however eagerly the thirsty lip of passion may drink it, there is always a trembling consciousness that there is poison in the draught, and although Alfred Latimer listened with a sort of fascination to his companion's tales, and yielded his whole spirit to his influence, he nevertheless felt that he was base even while he prepared to imitate him in baseness.

"So," said Captain Tankerville, with the slightest possible sneer upon his lip, "this Mr. Morton, it seems, wants to take you back and tie you to your mother's apron string again. If I were you, I wouldn't go; I'd stop here in London as soon as I had got the money, if it were only just to show them that they couldn't make a baby or a fool of me any more."

"So I should," answered Alfred Latimer, laughing, "but I have other things that draw me to Mallington besides my mother's apron string. I've got some business to do there, captain; but as soon as that is done I shall come back again."

"Well, I wish to heaven," said Captain Tankerville, "that while you are getting this money you would get fifty pounds for me. I can pay you in three months, but in the mean time it's a great bore to be kept in for thirty pounds all that time."

"Oh, I'll lend you the fifty pounds," replied Alfred Latimer, "for there will be more than two hundred after paying all my debts, which I am to have to start me again."

"You are a devilish good fellow, Latimer," said his companion, "and I'm very much obliged to you; so much obliged, indeed, that I'll just give you a hint which you may take or not as you like; but it is what I would do myself if I were you. Here you are to get twelve hundred pounds. It is nobody's giving to you, or I suppose you would consider yourself bound in honor to do with it as the giver proposed; but it is raised upon your own property, and so it is your own, therefore you may do what you like with it. Now, Timson, the officer, tells me that all the detainers against you do not amount to two hundred pounds, and if I were you I'd just pay them off, put the other thousand in my pocket, and take a start for the continent, and let the rest of the scoundrels who have bills against me whistle for the money. Beyond doubt they have cheated you out of two-thirds of the amount, and I'd see them all—before I paid them."

"Oh, they have cheated me enough, I know," said Alfred Latimer, "and what you propose isn't a bad plan. I could easily run down from Mallington to Southampton," he continued, musing, "and get over to Havre."

"To be sure you could," answered Captain Tankerville, "I did it once myself three or four years ago. Instead of going over to Calais, where I thought they would be on the look-out for me, I went round to Southampton and got clear off. The fact was I had been called out by Green, of the dragons. He was a devilish good shot, I knew, and so was I. Now I, being the man called out, had by right the first fire; but my fool of a second gave that up, as they are getting into the habit of doing, and agreed that we should fire together. Both Green and I looked out sharply for the word; and I am sure enough that we should both have gone head over heels together, but somehow or another I fired just half a second first, before the word was well out of Fitzherbert's mouth. I suppose I was a little nervous"—and he laughed with a low, unpleasant, meaning laugh. "However, they swore that I had fired before my time, and as Green was as dead as a door nail it was expedient that I should take myself off as fast as possible. The two seconds, however, kept their own counsel, thanks to the law, which makes the seconds principals if the matter is brought in murder, so the affair was hushed up, but the two fools would never speak to me afterwards, just as if I were going to stand still and be shot through the head. Green would not have gone a bit the less for that, so it was just as well to take care of myself."

What might have been Alfred Latimer's reply to this very honest and candid communication of his companion's views of the code of honor cannot be told; for just as the other brought it to a conclusion, the cerberus came

up announcing Mr. Quatterly; and the young gentleman had just time to ask "Who the devil's he?" and Captain Tankerville to give him an admonition to stick fast to his plan, when the large head and shoulders of the worthy solicitor appeared, with the little legs walking busily underneath them. He looked at Captain Tankerville with a sardonic grin, his small black eyes sparkling unpleasantly, and the corners of his capacious mouth turning down.

"Ah, captain!" he said, "you here! You've changed your lodging, I see—you're right, you're right. 'To fresh fields and pastures new.'"

"Of course I did not come here willingly, sir," replied Captain Tankerville. "But I shall soon be out, that's one comfort."

"No, no, no," said Mr. Quatterly, "it may be a *come forth*, but not a *comfort*, surely!" and he laughed at his abominable pun; "but stay where you are, stay where you are. The Surrey side is best. Better air, even in King's-Bench-walk than Horsemanor-lane, captain."

"Sir, do you intend to insult me?" asked the other, with his brow darkening; "if so, I shall know—"

"No, no, not at all," replied Mr. Quatterly, "not at all, captain. I'm a great coward; I never fight—I'm too big to fight; I never fought but once, and that was with my fists. Didn't mean anything unpleasant, on my life; but you know the place where one last sees a man naturally recurs to one's mind when next we meet him. You know my way, and how I rattle on, and you should only laugh at it—'The little dog laughed,' you know, 'to see such sport, though the dish ran away with the spoon.' But this is Mr. Latimer, I suppose. Sir, my business is with you."

"Well, then, Latimer, I will not interrupt your business with this person," said Captain Tankerville, with a very savage air; and he walked out of the room, finding the presence of Mr. Quatterly by no means a relaxation.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried the good solicitor, walking into a chair, for it could hardly be called sitting down, his legs being too short to bend much in the operation. "Ha! ha! ha! Well, Mr. Latimer, adversity does make us acquainted with strange bed-fellows. But to business, sir. I wait upon you at the desire of a client of mine, Edward Wilmot, Esq., and another client of mine, Mr. Morton. The one has a sum of money to lend, the other has requested that it may be lent to you. He has explained the nature of the security; and as the deed cannot be properly drawn up for some time, I have brought a little memorandum of agreement which will serve the purpose in the interim, being unwilling to keep you in such a place, and amongst such a set of scamps a moment longer than is necessary. I thought I should find Mr. Morton here."

He then proceeded to inform Mr. Alfred Latimer of the particulars of the arrangement, and Mr. Latimer, in turn, commenced inquiries directed to find out how Mr. Quatterly intended to pay the money. That gentleman, however, at once informed him that it would be requisite to pay all the detaining creditors in the first place, and then to discharge the bills of all the others, a list of which had been obtained from

Mrs. Charlton, to whom they had all at various times applied concerning her son's debts. That done, he said, he would hand over the balance to Mr. Latimer, receiving his signature of the memorandum, which he laid before him for his perusal.

Alfred Latimer, however, demurred to the payment of his debts by any other hands but his own, saying, "You do not think I should like to be arrested again, I suppose."

"Oh dear, no!" replied Mr. Quatterly; "not at all, not at all. Can have no objection at all to your paying them yourself; but you know, my dear sir, the detainers must be discharged, or you cannot get out."

"Yes, I know that," answered the young man; "but it would look as if I could not be treated, if I were to have any one else pay the rest of the people but myself."

"Very true—so it would, so it would," said the solicitor, who perfectly saw through the whole manoeuvre, and suspected who had prompted it. "Well, we will pay the detaining creditors first, and then leave you to settle with the others. But the sheriff's office must first be searched, you know, to see what are lodged; and we may as well have that done while we are waiting for Morton. I will go and send the man below to do it," and with his usual rapidity he walked out and closed the door behind him.

"Be so good," he said, as soon as he got into the den below, and had closed that door too, "to send round as fast as possible to all those persons named in that list, and tell them, with my compliments, to lodge detainers against Alfred Latimer, Esq., for the amount of their bills before one o'clock, or they won't be paid. Then, at half-past one search the office, and come up and report. Don't go to the people yourself, that would not be regular. Send some one you can trust. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Quatterly," replied the man, winking his left eye, "I twig;" and the solicitor, leaving the paper in his hands, returned to the young gentleman above, and entered into pleasant conversation with him.

"Airy hero!" he said, looking out of the window; "airy, Mr. Latimer; and, doubtless, good society."

"Why, you do not seem to think the only society I have got very pleasant," replied the other; "at least if one may judge by the way you spoke to Captain Tankerville."

"No offence meant, I can assure you, sir," replied the lawyer; "he has been twice accused of swindling, it is true, and once of forgery—all through a mistake, no doubt—all through a mistake; but, nevertheless, character is a very funny thing. It is very like a certain gentleman mentioned in history, and named Humpty Dumpty, about whom there is this legend:—

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty got a great fall;
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Cannot set Humpty Dumpty where he was again.

And so it is with a man's reputation, Mr. Latimer. It takes a great many horses and a great many men to set up a character once fallen; stable materials, sir—friable materials—easily cracked, and not easily mended."

Mr. Quatterly meant well, very well; and had Alfred Latimer been, as he supposed, a young man standing on the brink of evil, his observations would have been as well directed as they were meant; but there is a particular point of moral degradation, where the sight of the dark gulf into which vice plunges man, is more dangerous than serviceable, and that is when they are in it. They then see no means of escape—no path to reascend, and in despair seek in the abyss a deeper depth. Perhaps, the only way to recover them at all, is to blindfold them to the dangers of their situation, lest their heads turn, and let hope lead them out by the hand.

Such was the state of Alfred Latimer. He knew more of his own conduct than the man who spoke, and his only reflection was, "Well, then, there is no use of trying. I'm in for it, and must go on."

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, Mr. Morton was ushered in, and shook hands both with him and Mr. Quatterly. After a few minutes had passed in conversation of no great moment, the solicitor seemed to grow somewhat impatient, and inquired if Mr. Latimer knew the amount of debts already appearing against him in the sheriff's office!

The young gentleman answered boldly about two hundred pounds.

Mr. Quatterly replied, "Oh! if that is all, I have money enough at my banker's to give cheques for the amount; if it had been much more I must have gone home to get it. But this fellow is so long that I do not know what to do; I shall be too late for my next appointment."

Morton, who was well aware that the solicitor was one of the most wealthy of a wealthy tribe, was not a little surprised to hear him speak of having about two hundred pounds at his banker's, but, judging that there was some cause, he answered, "Perhaps you had better go to your appointment, my good sir, and return with the amount."

"Well, perhaps I had," said Mr. Quatterly; "and I shall certainly return with a *mount* if I have to climb these dreadful stairs again. It will be better, too," he continued, looking at Morton, "because Mr. Latimer wishes to pay all the other bills himself."

"Indeed!" said Morton gravely. "I thought you intended to return to Mallington at once, Latimer!"

"And so I do," replied the young gentleman sharply; but I intend to stay a day in town first. There is no objection to that, I suppose."

"I have no right to object, though I am sorry for it," answered Morton gravely—for he had his doubts of what might become of the money if Alfred Latimer retained it in his own possession for even a day in London.

"A letter, sir," said a dirty-faced, sallow-gowned maid, putting a note into Mr. Latimer's hands: "eightpence, if you please." Those were days when penny postage had not been invented, and Alfred Latimer, paying the postage without further inquiry, except how the letter came to be so late, which was explained by the fact of its having gone to his former lodging, looked at the back as if the hand-writing was strange to him.

Mr. Quatterly at the same time took his departure, saying he would soon be back, and Morton walked to the window to leave his companion to read the epistle he had just received, at his ease. The contents, whatever they were, seemed to produce a strange change in Alfred Latimer, for, after having vented an oath, and the exclamation, "That she shan't, by —!" he began to walk up and down the room in a state of great agitation."

"I say, Morton," he continued after a pause; "that d—d coach does not start till nine, I think. Would you mind joining me in a chaise down?"

"I cannot wait till to-morrow," replied his companion, "otherwise I should be very happy."

"Ay, but I have changed my mind," said Alfred Latimer; "I shall go down to-day as soon as this fellow returns. What a time he is! Why, he could have looked over all the offices in London before this! Do you mind starting at once?"

"Oh, no," replied Morton, a little embarrassed; "I must, indeed, go home for an hour, but I will rejoin you in that time with a chaise, if you like."

"Well, do, do, there's a good fellow;" cried Alfred Latimer. "You can go and get ready at once if that's all. I and old Squatterly can settle all the rest, while you are away, and I'll pack up my things in the meanwhile."

Morton smiled almost sadly; for he could conceive no very good motive which could have operated so sudden a change in a man of Alfred Latimer's disposition; but, agreeing to his proposal, he took his departure, and left him alone. The moment he was gone the young gentleman hurried to his dirty bed-chamber, laid out the few articles of clothing he had purchased in London since his arrival, and those he had packed up at Mallington ere he left his mother's house, and placed them in a port-manteau, which he had brought from the lodgings where he had been arrested. In the meanwhile Captain Tankerville, as soon as he saw Morton depart, walked out of the room below, and into that where he had left Alfred Latimer; but not finding him there he made some inquiries of the people in the back parlor, from whom he learned that Mr. Quatterly was expected back every minute. This intelligence drove him into his own den again, where he amused himself for three-quarters of an hour by practising some very ingenious and serviceable tricks with a pack of cards.

At the end of that time, there was a knock at the street door, and he heard the voice of the sheriff's-officer speaking to his man as they entered together, almost immediately succeeded by another knock and the tones of Mr. Quatterly. The sheriff's-officer and the solicitor then walked upstairs together, and Mr. Latimer was called out of his bed-room.

Now, the officer was a very different personage from his man; a very tall, thin, neat personage, in a blue satin cravat, tied tight, and his voice was sweet and complacent. "Happy to hear it's all arranged, Mr. Latimer," he said, "I have been down to search the office, and find a few little matters lodged this morning. Let me see, I'll just run them up;" and,

sitting down, he soon made out an account amounting to nine-hundred and seventy-five pounds, which, with costs, charges, &c., swelled the whole to about one thousand and nine.

Alfred Latimer gazed with astonishment. "Why, Tankerville told me, Mr. Quincy," he said, "that there was but two hundred."

"Ay, sir, that was the day before yesterday," replied the officer. "These have come in since," and he ran his finger down a long list at the bottom of a paper he held in his hand.

"It does not matter, you know, my dear Mr. Latimer," observed Mr. Quatterly, putting on a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles. "As they were all to be paid, it is better to get it all over at once. 'Save you trouble, you know, and be sooner done. There are few men who ever, like the man in the moon, come down too soon to find their way to Norwich; and you'll have more time to amuse yourself, if you do stay in London till to-morrow.'"

"I am going down at once, sir," said Alfred Latimer, in a sullen tone; "Mr. Morton is to bring a chaise directly."

"Ay, a sensible man, Mr. Morton," rejoined Mr. Quatterly, "a very sensible, excellent man, indeed. Few like him, sir—few like him. He has but one fault that I know of."

"And pray what may that be?" asked Alfred Latimer, dully, looking over the papers on the table.

"He hates a pun," answered the solicitor, in a serious tone. "But now, Mr. Quincy, to business."

And that business was soon settled; the bills were paid in full by Mr. Quatterly; the costs in part, for he thought fit to dock some excessive charges; and the sheriff's officer knew his character too well to make aught but faint resistance in his own case, and contented himself with Mr. Quatterly's engagement to pay the rest of the amount, if it could be legally enforced in the case of others.

When all this was settled, the worthy solicitor turned to Mr. Latimer, saying, "And now, sir, there's the chaise, I hear. Morton is the most punctual man on earth; always to the tick of the clock, and yet never goes tick either. And now, Mr. Latimer, after the little expenses of the agreement, &c., there is a sum due to you of one hundred and—let me see—call it one hundred and ninety pounds—we can settle any other little matter afterwards. Will you have it in money or a cheque?"

"All in money," answered Alfred Latimer; and Mr. Quatterly's pocket-book instantly disgorged the amount. Morton was in the room a moment after; and though there was a little anger in Alfred Latimer's heart at being frustrated in his hopes of receiving the larger sum, with which he had already built castles enough in the air to have held a whole generation, yet he was even more eager than ever to return to Mallington without a moment's delay; and as soon as it was announced that he was free, he descended the stairs, and sprang into the chaise, without giving one thought or one word to Captain Tankerville. Such are the friendships of the bad. The other saw him depart from the window, and clenching his fist, with a

fearful oath, he exclaimed, "The blackguard has bilked me; but curse me if I don't do for him some day."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE conversation of Morton, as they rolled along, did Alfred Latimer more good than that of Mr. Quatterly had done. Although, as we have hitherto seen him, he had shown himself somewhat grave, for there had been many thoughts and feelings of deep interest in his heart and mind,—and deep thought, as well as deep feeling, is always grave,—yet he was by no means constitutionally a sad or sombre man. He was one of great powers of imagination; but those powers were disposed quite as often to exercise themselves on gay as on serious subjects when they presented themselves naturally, and he seldom thought it worth while to seek for anything that did not come naturally. He was not either the creature of impulse or of the moment. He was always the same; but his mind dealt with things as he found them, subjecting all to the influence of itself, but still not putting forth its strength to throw a snow ball as it would have heaved a rock; nor sporting with the tangles of Næra's hair, as if he had been solving a problem in Euclid. There was ever, indeed, in his gayest of moods somewhat of thought, which showed that the stream ran deep beneath the ripple, and in his most serious moments somewhat of fancy, which evinced that the present cares had brighter aspirations beyond them.

In the present instance, indeed, he deviated from his ordinary course; and though from much that had passed he had received a grave—nay a sad impression, yet he strove to be cheerful, and to force his thoughts from painful realities and very dark anticipations, to the less stern and gloomy objects that the passing scene presented. And what a city is London for every suggestion that the mind of man can desire—whether for bright and cheerful, or for shadowy and desponding—with its life and activity, its eagerness, and its intense worldliness; its fierce passions, and its light absurdities; its marvelous selfishness, and its still more surprising benevolence. There never was anything—nay, not in Greece or Rome, nor even in those wide deserted eastern plains, that once were the nest of cities thronged with life—anything so wonderful as that great capital, in the strangeness of its contrasts; and yet, by what fine and beautiful gradations—by what a magical softening of semi-tints, the strong lights and the dark shades blend into each other.

For three or four miles the journey of the travelers lay through the metropolis; first through that portion called the city, where the eternal roll of wheels, and the everlasting movement of interminable crowds deafened the ear and dazzled the eye; and yet never did the result of that extraordinary combination of habit and of reason, of law and of will, of good feeling and of self-interest, which forms the great constraining bond of society, appear more conspicuous in order and propriety. There might be things to shock the eye, or to offend the ear—there might be inconveniences, quarrels, im-

pediments; but still the human tide flowed on in cheerfulness and regularity, still one made way for another, still the savage in man's heart was overruled by the silent inert power of the multitude, and the selfish eagerness of the few gave way to the sense of the many.

After that the chaise rolled on through what is termed the more fashionable part of the town, and the very desertion of the streets at that period of the year showed that the travelers had entered a quarter where another spirit reigned. Long rows of houses with closed shutters—squares with scarcely an inhabitant remaining in them (but some old servant left to keep the mansion in order, or some woman put in by an upholsterer, with scanty payment eked out by the advantage of lodging) presented themselves as they went on. But even here were gradations marking the narrow limits of fashion. First came the streets of shops, not nearly so gay or so thronged as in a more propitious time of the year; the equipages thundering no more along the pavement, the footway uncrowded, and many of the master tradesmen themselves absent on some of those expeditions to the sea side, which have made foreigners believe that the English citizen, like the anchovy, will not keep without pickling; then, the abodes of the higher classes, utterly vacant, or if not so, with blinds drawn down, and every sign of absence, in the pitiful vanity of being afraid of doing what others do not do: then the mixed atmosphere, where the little ape the great—affecting their follies without being able to imitate their better qualities, and striving to follow them in magnificence without having the means of equalling them in expense; and lastly the suburbs, where unambitious mediocrity goes on in humbler walks, content with envying and decrying that which they can never attain.

On all and each of these scenes Morton had something to remark, and though his companion was somewhat silent and morose, he persevered in trying to lead him to reason and to think, believing that exercise of mind is one of the best remedies for mental maladies, as exercise of the limbs is for those of the body. Nor was he altogether unsuccessful; for after having remained sullen for some time, Alfred Latimer began to converse; and if not very reasonably, yet the effect was so far good that it weaned him from the angry feelings which he had been indulging in regard to the disappointment he had experienced. His conversation, it is true, was restrained; for Morton and he had few subjects in common, and he was also unwilling to let the other behold any part of what was passing in the deeper chamber of the heart. He felt as if he were playing a game with a skillful adversary, and must not let him see his cards—that sad, that fatal mistake, which all who are carried away by their passions make, of regarding the most friendly hand that would arrest the horses that are running away with them to destruction, as that of an enemy. And Morton was certainly playing a game, but it was not against Alfred Latimer; it was against his bad passions and his evil habits; but they were those which the young man thought fit to look upon as his friends; and if it be necessary in the wide world to choose our friends well and wisely, it is still more necessary so to choose.

our friends from amongst the tenants of our own hearts.

"It is strange," said Morton, as they rolled through the crowded streets of the city, "and yet beautiful as strange, that if one could trace each of the multitude that is passing by us, and examine his fate and history, we should find as a general result that the cheerful and happy face, the light and easy heart, is the property of one who has his passions and his conduct under due control."

"I do not know that at all," answered Latimer, "we find plenty of very good people who are very miserable."

"Not long, and not often," answered Morton; "of course I mean in the aggregate. It is undoubtedly true that sorrows and misfortunes do effect the best, and from that very fact one author of great talent, but no very strong religious feelings—I mean Voltaire—has drawn an inference of a future state where there shall be compensation for such suffering; he calls it unmerited suffering, but I will not use that term, for what man can say that he has not deserved punishment! but yet, when griefs and anxieties do fall upon the good, how much more easily do they bear them, with how much more resignation and calmness than the wicked."

"I do not see why that should be," answered Alfred Latimer; "if I were a good man, and I never pretend to anything of the kind, I should only be the more angry and indignant at being punished for no offence."

"That is not the usual course of human nature," Latimer, replied Morton. "We always bear chastisement that we have deserved more impenitently than that which we have not."

"But I do not see that you have any cause to judge from all these people's faces that the good are a bit happier than the bad," rejoined his companion; "look at that fellow there, coming along with such a dark, eager look, as if he would cut everybody's throat that stopped him. Now, from his dress and his manner, and from the low bow which that shopkeeper is making him, I would bet any money he is some rich merchant or man upon change, with his pockets full of gold, and everything on earth that he can desire."

"Not improbable," replied Morton; "he looks very much the sort of man you have described."

"Well, then, I am sure he does not look happy," rejoined Alfred Latimer.

"Most likely he is quite the reverse," said Morton, with a smile; "but that is quite consistent with what I said. It was, that those who are the happiest—say, and who generally look the happiest too—are those who have their passions under due control. Now, a man may have everything on earth he can desire, as you say, and yet be rendered miserable by not having his passions under due control. For aught we know, that very merchant or banker, or whatever he is, may have the passion for wealth upon him to such an extent as to be as much or more a vice than the love of women or the dice-box is to others. I spoke of all passions, not of one or two; and one of the great mistakes that the world in general makes is to select a certain class of vices from the many as the objects of reprobation and punishment. We are

full of conventionalities, which render us more tolerant to some classes of evil—say, even to greater or more heinous crimes—than others. Some are even the objects of praise and approbation; and many, very many vices, as society is constituted, are the sure roads to worldly prosperity—but, mark, I do not say to happiness; that is a very different thing. What is a greater vice than the greed of gold? Not the honest desire of independence, not the honorable effort to rise by genius, industry, and perseverance; but I look upon that man who devotes his whole soul to the accumulation of wealth, who stints and wears down the inferior drudges who aid him in its acquisition that he may have the greater share, who refuses to open his hand or his heart to misery and want, or only undraws his purse for the world's applause—even if he commit no fraud, no deceit, to gain his ends—I look upon that man, I say, as more vicious than the libertine who frequents the abode of harlots. Yet to him the world gives its smile, which it denies to the other; but is either of them happy, Latimer! No, believe me, happiness is of a higher nature than to be attained by the mere gratification of desire."

Alfred Latimer relapsed into silence. His companion's reasoning did not convince him; for he had never formed to himself any other idea of happiness than the indulgence of passion and the satisfaction of his wishes, nor could he form any conception of it. But he had found, notwithstanding, that even where he had had the power of attaining that which he believed to be all that he wanted, it had not produced content. It had either been followed by inconvenience and punishment, or by some new thirst for some new gratification; and Morton's words served, at least, to show him that there were other sorts of happiness than any he had dreamed of, and he mused over the suggestion, assailed by thoughts to which he would not give admission.

At length, however, the observations of the solicitor came back to his memory, and he drew from them a long train of reasonings in his own mind, all tending to confirm him in the course he was determined to pursue. "It is never any use," he said suddenly, "for any man who has once taken a way for himself different from what the world call right, to seek to change it; for, as that Mr. What's-his-name remarked, no man can ever get himself into good repute again; and even were that possible, he would himself always have a hankering after the things in which he had indulged himself, which would get the better of him sooner or later."

"Oh dear, no!" exclaimed Morton, laughing; "if that were the case I am afraid half of our young men in England would only go on from bad to worse all their lives. Few in the unbridled days of youth do not commit many errors, and fall into many follies. Many, very many, even in more mature years fall before some overpowering temptation; but God forbid that either the one or the other should shut us out from all return. It is only against the man who wilfully and deliberately chooses the wrong course as that which he is determined to follow that the door can be said to be closed. For every other there is always an opportunity of retreading his steps—of abandoning evil, and seeking right. He may have to struggle against

habit as well as passion, that is true. It is a natural consequence of his faults, and, if he thinks rightly, a well-deserved punishment; but there is something to be set against that, well calculated to strengthen him to resist the influence of habit. Passion itself is tamed as he goes on in life—reason becomes mature—experience is gained, and is a great teacher. Then, as to what was said by Mr. Quatterly, if you mean him, I think you must have mistaken him. He could only allude to persons who, by some base and dishonorable action, had deprived themselves for ever of the esteem of honest men. Follies, vices, even crimes, have often been repented of, and atoned; but knavery argues a perversion both of heart and understanding, which I never yet heard of being remedied."

Alfred Latimer fell into thought again. He asked himself, perhaps, if he were in that position, and he might feel that if he had not all the symptoms of the disease, he had at least caught the infection. The reflection was not pleasant to him; but yet he indulged it till it became too oppressive to bear, and then casting it off, he roused himself to converse on anything else. He talked of the country, spoke of his eagerness to get back to Mallington, of shooting and hunting—even of the county ball. But Morton clearly saw that it was all effort, and that if amusements in which he did take pleasure had their share in the topics he discussed, the greater part were those for which he had never displayed any taste. Nevertheless, he indulged him in not pressing any graver thoughts upon his attention; not because he feared to be tedious, or to be thought a sermonizer and a bore, but because he was sure it would do no good, and only rouse a spirit of resistance against his influence which would do evil.

Thus passed the time till night began to fall. The sunset was magnificent, and they had full opportunity of observing it, for they were just then crossing a wild, elevated common, where frequent sudden and precipitous falls of the ground, at the distance of only a few yards from the high road, showed them a wide extended scene to westward, with long lines of blue shadow and bright light crossing the country, and the glowing sky of evening beyond. All in that quarter was clear, with the exception of some dark blue films drawn across the burning horizon; but to the south large rounded clouds were rising, heavy, and leaden, as if a thunderstorm were at hand. Yet ere the travelers had crossed the common, and before the sun had completely sunk, the sharp defined edges had softened off; and the clouds rapidly advancing spread half over the sky. About two miles farther on there was a change of horses, and by this time it was dark, with a few drops of rain beginning to fall. The post-boys were long in bringing out the horses, and Alfred Latimer was all impatience to get on; so that when Morton proposed to have lights, saying that the man would hardly be able to see, the young gentleman replied, "Oh, d—n it, no; do not let us wait for that. It is but ten miles to Mallington, and he ought to know his way in the dark."

On they went, then, with the rain falling fast, the sky quite covered with clouds, the sun down,

and the moon far below the horizon. It was as dark as pitch; not a ray of light served to guide them, and the very road was hardly to be distinguished from the grass beside it, the drenching torrent having changed its color from a light yellow to a dark brown. The storm pelted against the windows, and rattled upon the top of the chaise, and large drops of water found their way in through the crevices, rendering even the inside no very comfortable abode. Still the postilion rode on in his jacket, either following the inviolable custom of his fellows, never to put on a great coat till they are wet through; or fearing to leave his horses, one of which was somewhat unmanageable, in order to get at it. At length, going on at a furious rate for little more than an hour, they reached Mallington common, and there, apparently thinking that as they had nearly arrived at the end of their journey, it might be as well to protect himself from the storm, the driver stopped and got down.

Instantly Alfred Latimer thrust his head out of the window, demanding, "What the devil are you stopping for now! You are just at Mallington. Go on to the inn."

"I'll only just get my great coat, sir," replied the driver, and at the same moment he advanced towards the splinter-bar.

The young gentleman swore a loud oath, and whether the horses heard it and did not approve of it—or took it for an intimation to go on—or, not having any great coats to put on, did not choose to wait for another person's convenience, they started off at once, broke from a trot into a canter, and from a canter to a gallop.

Morton sat calmly back in the carriage, without moving hand or foot; but Alfred Latimer exclaimed aloud, "Confusion and the devil! they will break our necks down the hill, or have us into the river. By — they are off the road! They will be into the gravel pit! I will jump out."

But before he could execute his purpose or Morton could beseech him to desist, the chaise received a violent jerk, then plunged forward, leaning to one side as the near fore wheel went over a bank, then rolled over and over, with a terrible crash, and at length fell on its side, and lay with something striking hard against the front panels, like the feet of a horse in agony.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"LATIMER!" said Morton, raising himself partly in the carriage, with great pain, for he was severely bruised. But Alfred Latimer made no reply; and, putting his arm through the broken window, his companion opened the door of the carriage and got out. The darkness was profound, the rain falling in torrents, and it was impossible to see anything but the dark outline of a steep bank, down which the chaise had rolled, the vehicle itself nearly broken to pieces, and the two horses, one lying perfectly still, the other still kicking in the traces, but more and more faintly every moment. A sound, however, was heard above, as of some one running, and Morton raised his voice and shouted aloud. At first he was not heard, for the man ran on, but he called again, and then the post-boy ar-

answered from the bank above, exclaiming "Good heaven! where are you, sir!"

"Here at the bottom of the bank," answered Morton; "Mr. Latimer is much hurt. Run on as fast as possible to Mallington House, bring down several of the men, and a large chair or board, and lights. Lose not a moment; but bid them not alarm Mrs. Charlton till we ascertain the truth. Be quick! be quick!"

The man ran off again, knowing that he could render no assistance, even to his horses—the especial objects of his care—without the means of seeing where they were; and Morton remained by the side of the vehicle, judging that it would be inexpedient to make any effort to move his companion without assistance. He himself felt that though, as I have said, severely bruised, especially about the head and right shoulder, he was not seriously injured, and tying a handkerchief round his hand, which had been cut by the glass, he leaned over the chaise, and tried to discover how Latimer was lying. A moment after he heard a step, and then a voice exclaiming "Did not some one halloo out just now! Who's there!"

"We have been overturned into the pit," answered Morton. "Is there any place nearer than Mallington where we can get help, my friend? for Mr. Latimer here is much hurt, if not dead."

"The devil he is!" cried the man, who had now come near, and seemed, as far as the darkness would allow Morton to judge, to be a stout-built short man; "that's a bad job indeed. But we'll get help very soon from widow Brown's cottage; 'tis but a stone's throw. I'll be back directly."

"Bring a light," said Morton, "if you can get a lantern."

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the man, and away he ran, seeming to know every step of the ground thoroughly. In five minutes, or not much more, the gentleman who remained by the chaise saw a dim spark like a will-o'-the-wisp, moving at a little distance, and then heard voices; and then, coming on through the rain, with their figures becoming more distinctly visible by the light of a horn lantern which one of them carried, he perceived two men and a woman. They did not, indeed, seem of a very prepossessing appearance, by the yellow glare that fell upon their countenances when they approached; but no aid was to be refused at such a moment; and he found that, with good forethought, one of the men had brought a large rug, such as are used in that part of the country for the bed coverings of the poorer classes, in which to move the gentleman who had been most injured.

The first thing to be done, however, was to ascertain his exact condition, and, taking the lantern from the hand of the man who carried it, Morton held it into the chaise, and by its light discovered Alfred Latimer lying just where he had fallen, with a good deal of blood about his face. His hand was still round one of the holders in the inside of the vehicle, and his companion could perceive that the fingers seemed every now and then to tighten and then relax their grasp.

While he was making these observations, one of the men said in a low voice to the other

"That horse that's under is as dead as a stone, and this has broke his fore leg right through. It would be better to cut his throat at once."

"Here, d—n the horses! lend a hand to make this rug into a sort of hammock, to carry Mr. Latimer up to the cottage," said the other man. "Is he living or dead, sir?" he continued, addressing Morton; "let us have a look. I'll soon tell you. I've seen many a dead man in my day."

"He is living," answered Morton, "and I trust only stunned. Cut that strap which keeps the door from going further back, and then, if one goes to the top and another kneels on the side, we can lift him out without shaking him much."

The men obeyed him readily, while the woman—a tall, gaunt, hard-featured dame of sixty-five—held the lantern; and Morton, bending down into the chaise, got one arm under his companion's shoulders, lifting him gradually, while the man who was lying flat on the side of the vehicle, supported part of the weight, and the other at the top guarded his head with his hands, to prevent it striking against the wood work. He was thus speedily drawn out of the broken chaise and seated by the side, with Morton supporting his head upon his arm. He groaned twice or thrice while this was taking place, and it was now evident to all that he still breathed without much oppression.

"Now, sir, let us carry him to the cottage, and lay him flat down on a bed," said the short sailor-like man, who formed one of the party; "that's the best thing for him till the doctor can be fetched."

"It would be better to carry him home at once," replied Morton; "Mallington House cannot be far, if I judge rightly where we are."

"It's more nor a mile, and that a good un," said the woman.

"Besides, the cottage is just in the way," rejoined the man; "he can be moved after the doctor comes, if he thinks it safe. I don't think he's so much hurt, after all."

"If the house be as far as that, the cottage will be best," replied Morton; "but I thought this pit was close to Mallington?"

"You're thinking of what we call the first pit," replied the other man; "this is the third—Mother Brown's pit some people call it, don't they, mother!"

Alfred Latimer was then placed in the rug, which by this time had been gathered together with twine at the two ends, and the woman going before with the lantern, the two men carried him forward along a little path—which was scarcely traceable along the bottom of the gravel pit—to the entrance by which carts were commonly brought in. The party then issued out upon the common, but they had not reached the higher ground when two or three lights were seen coming a little to the right, and a horse's feet were heard upon the road.

"Here are the people from Mallington House," said Morton.

"Ay, and that's the doctor's horse," rejoined the woman; "I'd know his trot among a thousand—I'll give him a call;" and raising her voice to an unearthly shriek, she shouted, "Hic! Doctor, doctor! Dr. Netherlands!"

The horse's feet were checked in an instant,

and as they paused they soon saw the worthy surgeon, who was a little in advance of the party from the house, leading his horse carefully across towards the spot where he perceived their light.

"Goodness, gracious, sir! this is a sad affair," said Mr. Nethersole, as soon as he saw Morton, with his face somewhat cut. "You seem to be much hurt yourself. But how is Mr. Latimer? Is he dead?" he continued, gazing anxiously at the burden carried by the two men.

"No," answered Morton; "he is not dead. That, at least, is certain, but he is quite insensible; though whether the injuries he has received be really serious or not I have no means of judging. These good people say there is a cottage near, where he can be taken. Will it be better to go thither or to proceed to Mallington House?"

"Oh! to the cottage—to the cottage, on every account," said Mr. Nethersole. "In the first place, in these cases no time is to be lost; and in the next place Mrs. Charlton, who is luckily out at dinner with the Markhams, would be dreadfully shocked if she arrived just as her son was being brought in in such a state."

According to Mr. Nethersole's desire, the men proceeded at once to the cottage, which lay in a little nook of the common, not a hundred yards further on; and the young gentleman having been laid on a bed in the back room of the lower story, the surgeon proceeded to examine him, while the room became gradually crowded with servants and other people from Mallington. Morton stood near while the surgeon pursued his investigation, and gave him every aid in his power while he felt the head, traced the position and line of the limbs, and ascertained that no fracture had taken place; but he could not, even while thus occupied, avoid hearing the remarks of several of the inhabitants of Mallington who had come up with the servants of the house, in regard to the general character of Mother Brown, as she was called, her son, and their associates; but, although this was quite as unprepossessing as the personal appearance of the widow herself, yet it was of course a secondary consideration to Latimer's safety.

Mr. Nethersole, after due perquisitions and a little touch of medical mystery, declared that no bones were broken, but that, though the skull was not fractured, yet he feared concussion of the brain had taken place, for which bleeding would be immediately necessary, and, after that, perfect quiet. It was quite out of the question, therefore, he said, to remove the young gentleman to Mallington, as, if done in the first instance, venesection might come too late, and if attempted afterwards, fever might be superinduced. After this oration—for when in the actual exercise of his functions, Mr. Nethersole, who was at other times somewhat taciturn in the presence of those whom he considered his superiors, became oratorical—he ordered the young gentleman to be undressed, and placed in the bed where he lay. He then bled him somewhat largely, and the effect was certainly such as he could have desired, for, as the blood flowed, Alfred Latimer drew two or three deep sighs, opened his eyes, and looked about him.

Mr. Nethersole placed his finger on his lip saying, "Not a word, my dear sir. Lie perfectly still; take no notice of anything; open not your mouth, or I will not answer for the consequences. Let the room be cleared, and open that window. Now one of the servants must stay with the young gentleman till I can return. I will sit up with him myself to watch the symptoms as they appear; but he must not be left while I am necessarily absent for an hour or an hour and a half. Here, Wilkinson, you are the very man. Sit by Mr. Latimer till I return; do not let him speak or move till I come back: and you, Widow Brown, keep the house quite quiet. No gossiping, no talking, no drinking and squabbling, remember. I know you all, you know; and I will have my orders obeyed."

Widow or Mother Brown promised compliance in a very humble tone; for Mr. Nethersole, or "the doctor," as he was called, was a very important personage with her class, being in reality a very humane man to the poor, and acting on many occasions as medical attendant, as almoner, and as father confessor, all in one, for a very small remuneration. After having given these directions, and seen the room disencumbered of the crowd, who all departed except Morton—some into the neighboring chamber, some on their way home—the surgeon again sat down by the sick man's side, felt his pulse, nodded with a well-satisfied look, and then rose, saying in an oracular tone, "The circulation greatly relieved. I will be back soon, my dear sir, and bring something to compose you. Now, Mr. Morton, if you like, we had better walk back to Mallington; I think you will need a little attention yourself, and the fewer persons round Mr. Latimer the better."

"Very well," replied Mr. Morton; and, bending down, he added "Good by, for the present, Latimer; I will see you early to-morrow."

"Why, what the devil is all this about, Morton?" asked Alfred Latimer; "I have broken my head somehow."

But Mr. Nethersole instantly interfered, holding up his finger with a grave look, and saying, "Not a word, not a word, as you value your life. Come, Mr. Morton, come; our presence but excites him," and, walking out with the young gentleman, he gave some further directions to the servant Wilkinson, and they issued forth upon the common.

Morton's first question was in regard to Mr. Nethersole's real opinion of Alfred Latimer's situation; but who ever got a direct answer from a medical man? However, he made out sufficient from the cloud of pros and cons in which the surgeon enveloped his opinion, that he did not see any very dangerous symptoms at that time, but that the young gentleman having decidedly received a slight concussion of the brain, might at any moment during the next three or four days become suddenly worse, and that he could by no means say that the result might not be fatal, though he at present saw no reason to anticipate such a catastrophe. Mr. Nethersole would then have faintly ascertained exactly how the accident had occurred, remembering duly that he had an account to render to all the old ladies of Mallington. But Morton, in the first place, thought fit to satisfy himself

as to what was the state of affairs at Mallington House, inquiring whether Mr. Nethersole could tell at what hour Mrs. Charlton would return, and whether there was any chance of the news being carried to her where she was dining!

"No," answered the surgeon, promptly, "the man you sent acted with great discretion, I find; for on hearing that Mrs. Charlton was out—what a sweet creature she is! don't you think so, Mr. Morton!—he made two men servants come down with him to me, without going in at all, lest Miss Charlton should by some means hear of the event and be frightened out of her life."

"Then, Miss Charlton did not go with Mrs. Charlton?" asked Morton.

"No, my dear sir; she declined," answered the surgeon. "You know the young gentleman there has been rather particular in his attentions, and people do say that he is not very agreeable to the young lady—ha, ha, ha! you understand."

"Perfectly," replied Morton, drily; "but I think, Mr. Nethersole, it might be as well if I were to go in as we pass Mallington House, and give Miss Charlton the first news of Mr. Latimer's situation myself. She can afterwards break it to his mother in a more gentle manner than any man could do."

The surgeon agreed fully that such a plan was a very proper one, as he would, indeed, have pronounced any to be that Mr. Morton suggested; but perhaps, in this instance, he had some faint notion that the young gentleman might wish to have five minutes of Miss Charlton's company alone, and that she might not object to grant it; for he had remarked various looks and words at Dr. Western's, on the day after Louisa's rescue from the stream, which led him more into the secret of her heart than she either wished or imagined. Whatever were Morton's private thoughts, however—and, like the private thoughts and motives of all other men, they were, doubtless, of a very mingled character—they walked straight up to the gates of Mallington House; and there, while Mr. Nethersole was urging his young companion to come down to him as soon as his conference with Miss Charlton was over, and have his own injuries examined, all their plans were disarranged by the rush up of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, and by her instant recognition of the two gentlemen as the butler came forth with a light to open the gates in answer to their summons.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Ah, Mr. Morton, is that you!" cried Mrs. Charlton, letting down the carriage window; "come in—pray come in."

The carriage dashed on up to the house; and though the distance from the gate to the door was not more than twenty or thirty yards on that side of the mansion, the lady had descended from her vehicle, tripped into the house, and walked somewhat more slowly up stairs before Morton and Mr. Nethersole arrived. The latter gentleman, understanding that, in the changed circumstances of the case, he would not be one

too many; and thinking that if Mrs. Charlton were by any chance to faint at the tidings of her son's situation, his assistance might be necessary; and, like the barber of Bagdad, having his lancet ready, and his bandages in his pocket, he judged that he might as well walk in with the young gentleman, and take his share of things to come.

Morton advanced first, however, with a grave air, and asked the butler if he had said anything to his mistress regarding the accident.

"No, sir," replied the man; "she asked why I came out to open the gates; and I only replied, because Wilkinson was out. I thought you could tell her better than I could, sir."

It was a task, however, that Morton could gladly have dispensed with, for he was neither fond of inflicting nor of witnessing pain; but, nevertheless, fortifying his mind for the undertaking, he proceeded slowly up the stairs, followed closely by Mr. Nethersole, and entered the drawing-room, the door of which Mrs. Charlton had left open behind her. That lady was standing in a graceful attitude, with her hand leaning on a table, and the tips of her still beautiful fingers a little bent back, while a sweet and courteous smile illumined her countenance, and welcomed Mr. Morton before he appeared. Louisa, who had exchanged a few words with her step-mother, was seated on a sofa, with a table and book before her, and her lovely face, too, was raised towards the door, with a look of well-pleased expectation—ay, and something more than expectation; for there was a light in her deep eyes that let one see beyond them to her heart far more than she intended; the light of Love, beaming from two as sweet lamps as ever he kindled. The moment, however, that Morton appeared, with the blood still upon his face, and his hand tied up, her cheek turned deadly pale. She spoke not a word—indeed, she could not speak, but she rose at once, and then, feeling her knees tremble, caught the arm of the sofa for support. She knew how she loved him then, if she had never fully known it before.

Mrs. Charlton, on her part, uttered a pretty little scream, very musical in its tone, and exclaimed, "Good heaven! Mr. Morton, what has happened! You have met with some accident! You are hurt!"

"Very little, my dear madam," replied the young gentleman; "indeed, scarcely at all. My face has been scratched with some broken glass, and my hand cut; but we have every reason to be most thankful that the accident was not worse, for it might well have proved fatal to myself and my companion, instead of inflicting a few wounds and bruises, which will be well in a few days."

He managed his communication skillfully, for he at once communicated that he had a companion, and that he also had been injured, without at first telling Mrs. Charlton that that companion was her son, or informing her of the extent to which he had been hurt. The sound of his voice, and the firm tone in which he spoke, comforted Louisa a good deal; but still she felt very faint, and she sat down again, not at all sure how long she could stand.

Now, Mrs. Charlton was alarmed too, for she was very quick in the combination of her ideas;

and there were three distinct facts before her, from which, after putting them together, she drew a deduction very near the truth. There was Mr. Morton hurt, and suffering from an accident; he acknowledged having a companion in misadventure; and that companion was not now with him. From all these certainties she deduced that his companion had been her son; and that he was more hurt than Mr. Morton. If that gentleman had nothing of very great importance to communicate, he would not have thus presented himself at Mallington House, she thought, till he had washed his face and hands. If her son had been able, he would have come with him. Her son was unable, and that was the important fact Morton came to communicate. All this passed through her mind in a moment, and she felt very much alarmed, as I have said; but Mrs. Charlton was not a woman to faint. It was a thing that she never did; and this was certainly not an occasion on which she would have commenced the practice. She was very fond of her son, it is true, and, as the reader has seen, she had spoiled and indulged him very greatly in youth. But it was not for his sake she had done so; it was for her own. She loved him as her right hand, or her right eye, because he was a part of herself; and, perhaps, she would sooner have lost her right hand, or her right eye, than him, if she could have done so without any pain or danger. Lumb against son she would not have hesitated, I think; but if suffering—personal suffering, or risk—were thrown into the scale of mutilation, I'm afraid Alfred Latimer would have had but a poor chance.

She did not faint, therefore, or feel any inclination to do so; but yet she was anxious and frightened, and her countenance showed it.

"Speak, my dear sir! speak, Mr. Morton," she said; "you have more to tell; Alfred was with you, is it not so? Alfred is hurt? very much hurt? Tell me the truth, my dear friend. I can bear it."

The last words nearly the same words which she had used when the servant ran in to inform her that her first husband had destroyed himself; and she did bear it with wonderful philosophy.

Morton had an instinctive perception that in this instance he might speak without much farther circumlocution as far as Mrs. Charlton was concerned; but he did not forget that Louisa was in the room, and he was sure that, though she neither loved nor esteemed Alfred Latimer, she would feel even more shocked and pained by the intelligence that was to be told than his mother. He answered, then, in a manner to remove anxiety as far as possible without deviating from truth.

"He is much better, my dear Mrs. Charlton," he said; "he was apparently a good deal hurt at first, but he recovered wonderfully as soon as our skillful friend here, Mr. Nethersole, bled him. There are no bones broken, happily, though he was for a time stunned by the fall."

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Charlton; and Louisa echoed her words with truer devotion.

The surgeon advanced to play his part; for, during the short dialogue which had taken place, Morton had purposely put himself forward, fearing that Mr. Nethersole might so overload his account with medical terms that the two ladies

might be left in ignorance of whether Alfred Latimer were dead or alive. That worthy gentleman now proceeded to justify his caution by explaining to Mrs. Charlton, in the darkest possible manner, the situation of her son, and what he had at first apprehended, as well as what was now to be guarded against. For aught that the mother could gather from this communication Alfred might have been a marmalade; but Morton stepped in to her help, saying, "I see you do not exactly understand Mr. Nethersole. It is merely that Latimer was at first stunned and speechless, but has now quite recovered both his speech and his senses; and though our good friend thinks it would be imprudent to remove him from the cottage to which he was at first taken, in order to give him time to recover completely, yet there is no great chance of any danger resulting from the accident. Is it not so, Mr. Nethersole?"

"Precisely, sir," replied the surgeon; and Mrs. Charlton, sinking into a chair, gazed in Morton's face, thinking what she ought to do next.

"I should very much like to go to him," she said, after a moment's pause; "but the carriage has gone away, I fear, and—"

"It rains dreadfully," said Mr. Nethersole, finishing Mrs. Charlton's sentence nearly as she would have finished it herself. "Do not think of it, my dear madam. I will stay with him all night. I propose to return immediately."

"I do not see any necessity for your going," added Morton; "for he is so much better that I doubt not a few hours will remove all chance of danger, and Mr. Nethersole particularly recommends quiet. One of your servants—Wilkinson, I think, is his name—is with your son. Mr. Nethersole will be in attendance; and if he should be worse you can be sent for."

"Thank you, Mr. Morton, thank you," said Mrs. Charlton; "you are very kind to me in every respect—kinder than any one of my own relations, I am sure. Here, you have undertaken this journey, and been in peril of your life, all on my account; and how I can ever be grateful enough I cannot tell. But pray let me hear how this accident has happened, and what it was; for I know nothing but that you have both been hurt."

"I beg pardon for interfering," said Mr. Nethersole, with a smile, "but I must really here exert my authority as a disciple of Galen. Mr. Morton is hurt, Mrs. Charlton. He does not yet know how much—we none of us know how much—for he has given himself up entirely to Mr. Latimer, and has taken no care of himself whatever."

Louisa, who, as the reader has remarked, had not spoken a word, raised her eyes to Morton's face with a look of tenderness and admiration, mingled with fear, as if imploring him, for her sake, to attend to his own safety; but Mr. Nethersole went on, "He is wet through and through, too, so that it is high time that he should go home, change his dress, and then allow me to inquire into the injuries he has received. Wounds and bruises, apparently slight at first, are often the most dangerous if not attended to. Before he gives any account of what has taken place, then, I say authoritatively, let him go home."

take her you love, rich or poor; but what ought she to do! ought she to consent to such a thing!"

"I will give her no choice," answered Morton, pressing her to his heart. "She has given her promise—she has made no condition; and under no circumstances would she seek to retract it, I am sure. Indeed," he added, smiling, "I would not consent, if she did. She is fast bound, and cannot escape."

"I do not wish it, Edmond, I do not wish it," repeated Louisa, earnestly. "I should hardly have fortitude to cast away such happiness, even for your sake."

As she spoke the butler announced that supper was ready, and, though Morton felt the truth of the old French proverb "*qui fait l'amour soupe*," he was forced to sit down to the less pleasant meal, and make the best of a dull hour.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFTER Morton and Mr. Nethersole had left Mother Brown's cottage, Alfred Latimer lay for several minutes gazing up towards the ceiling of the back room in which he had been placed—if ceiling, indeed, it could be called, where a good deal more lath was apparent than plaster, and that portion of the latter which remained was principally supported by long filaments of horsehair, which not unfrequently suffered a large mass of mortar to hang waving about in the wind over the heads of those who went to and fro beneath. A small deal table, notched at the edges like a school-boy's desk, and with "Tom Brown" cut in large capitals in two or three places, stood in the middle of the chamber, at no great distance from the bed; and on it, in a battered tin candlestick, was a solitary tallow candle with the top of the wick spreading out into sooty fungi, and the grease weltering down the sides. A tattered old clintz curtain half concealed the window; but where the sash appeared it showed many a piece of glass wanting, in one spot pasted up with brown paper, while in others the gaping aperture was stuffed up with dirty rags. To these interesting objects the young gentleman turned his eyes, after he had studied the canopy over his head for a considerable time, and then he exclaimed "D—n it! This is very strange. Why, I feel all knocked about; and where the devil I am, I can't tell. Surely that is Wilkinson. Why, what is all this! Where am I? How came I here?"

It was very evident that, as not uncommonly happens in such cases, the blow he had received on the head had obliterated all memory of the events immediately preceding. It is generally judged expedient to touch upon the subject of his state as little as possible with a patient so circumstanced; but Wilkinson, though a shrewd sensible man, had not studied the matter very deeply, and he consequently set to work, and, with a view of amusing his young master, told him all that had happened. The tale seemed to awaken Alfred Latimer's remembrance; and when he heard that he was in Mother Brown's cottage he instantly showed that his recollection was quite unimpaired, by saying in a low voice "Where are my clothes, Wilkinson? Put them here on the bed, and do not let the people get at

them, for there is a good sum of money in one of the pockets. Don't lose sight of them for a minute, Wilkinson; for it would be a devil of an affair if they were to take that."

"Don't you think it would be better to send it to mistress to keep for you, sir!" asked the servant; "you see I might be called away for a minute or two."

"No, curse it! she would keep it with a vengeance," answered her dutiful and respectful son. "I should get it back as soon from them as I should from her."

"Then, why not give it to Mr. Nethersole, to take care of for you till you are well," replied the man; "it would be quite safe with him."

"Well, perhaps I may," rejoined Latimer; "that's no bad thought—but the doctor's gone, isn't he?"

Wilkinson made him understand that Mr. Nethersole would soon be back; and then remembering the caution which had been given, he warned Mr. Latimer that he ought not to speak, but to remain quiet. Alfred Latimer, however, was not a man to restrain himself in anything; and therefore he continued to ask questions and to swear at his companion, if he answered briefly, or remonstrated, till the servant's patience becoming near its end, he replied "Indeed, Mr. Latimer, I must obey the doctor's orders, and as you will not be quiet and keep silent, I will go into the other room, but I will take care no one comes in without me."

"Go to the devil, if you like," replied Alfred Latimer; "I don't want you; but snuff the candle first."

The man did as he was directed, and then left the room. The young gentleman then attempted to sit up, and drew his clothes from the foot of the bed, that he might see if his money were all safe; but the effort was too painful to be persisted in, and he lay down again with a moan. About half an hour after this Mr. Nethersole returned, and having heard from the servant in the outer room that Mr. Latimer was very unmanageable, he replied "Oh! I will keep him quiet. I shall stay here till morning; so you can either remain or go home for an hour or two, as you like; only be back by five o'clock; for I have a case I must see."

"Well, then, sir, I would rather go home for a bit," answered Wilkinson, "I was up early this morning, and I should like a few hours' sleep."

"I wonder where my lad's to sleep," said Widow Brown, in a sullen tone. "That's his bed, in where the younker is lying; and half the things spoiled with blood."

"Oh, never you mind, Mother Brown," answered Mr. Nethersole, who knew his party well, "you'll be paid more than you spend; and as to Tom's sleeping, it is not the first time he has sat up o' nights, I fancy, and won't be the last. You've slept in worse places than this chair, Tom, hav'at you? and the shooting season being begun, you must be in practice, or I mistake! You forget who you are talking to, Goody."

"Well, doctor," said Mother Brown with a grin, "if he have got a partridge or a pheasant now and then, you've had your share on 'em; and better stuff nor ever come out o' your shop, too."

"I know I have had a little present now and then, Mother Brown," replied Mr. Nethersole; "and I never ask where anything comes from but humbug, and that I always send back again. So don't whine to me about where Tom is to sleep. He'll do well enough, and you'll be paid. That's all you want. It's raining too hard for guns to go off, or he wouldn't be here. I understand it all; but it's no business of mine; and I always mind my own business, as you well know. That's the way to be friends with every one; and you can't say I ever refused to see you when you were sick, or give you medicine either. Pay when you can, when you can't let it alone; but never attempt to palaver me, for that is what I cannot bear."

"Well, you are a good creature," answered the beldame; "only you see that we are paid, for that Mrs. Charlton, rich as she is, is a bit of a screw, and does not pay every one as she ought."

"Oh, you'll be paid, you'll be paid!" replied the surgeon, walking into the other room; and then shutting the door, he held up his finger again to Mr. Latimer not to speak, sat down by his bed-side and felt his pulse. "A little fever," he said, as if speaking to himself. "I am afraid there has been some excitement here. In your case, Mr. Latimer, Hippocrates is as good as Hippocrates, and better; but we must make them go hand in hand—silence, my dear sir! silence! Not a single word, if you please. I am going to sit by your bed-side all night; and if you want anything, just hold up your finger. I shall divine what you want, and give it you."

"You'll be devilish clever, then," said Alfred Latimer aloud, "for I want something now!"

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"Why, I'm quite composed already," answered the other.

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This speech had the desired effect, though, undoubtedly, it was rather strong in language. Alfred Latimer did not at all like the prospect so unceremoniously presented to him, and drinking off the draught, he lay down as he was bid and kept silence, while Mr. Nethersole seated himself in the chair by his side, and taking a medical book out of his pocket began to read. Nine times did Mr. Nethersole snuff the candle; and then, as there was no use of snuffing it any longer, he went into the next room and got another. Mother Brown had gone to bed; her son was snoring in a chair; and when he returned the worthy surgeon found that Alfred Latimer was breathing hard too. The example he judged a good one, and as he could find nothing

on which to prop his head softer than his own arms, he folded them on the table, bent down his forehead upon them, and was soon in that strange mysterious state, wherein the distinction between the life of the body and the life of the soul is more plain than in any of the other phenomena of our marvelous existence.

He had gone on for some hours, and Alfred Latimer was still in a sound and comfortable sleep when the worthy surgeon was suddenly awakened by the opening of the door. He looked up, and saw the widow's son beckoning to him.

"Here's your boy, doctor, wants you quick," said the man in a low tone.

"The deuce he does," murmured the surgeon; "that Mrs. Tilson come before her time—she always does—I never saw anything like it."

It was, indeed, as he supposed; and after a brief conference with the boy at the door, he returned and looked at his patient, and then at his watch. The former was still enjoying as tranquil repose as if he had never been bruised almost to a mummy, and the latter pointed to a quarter past four.

"Wilkinson must be back in three-quarters of an hour at the farthest," said Mr. Nethersole, "and Mrs. Tilson can't wait, that's certain. No great harm can happen; for he's doing quite well, and for that matter I might just as well have been at home, and in my bed, if he had not been Mrs. Charlton's son. Here, Tom," he continued, putting his head into the next room, and speaking in a low voice to Mother Brown's son, who seemed settling himself to sleep again; "When Wilkinson returns tell him to give his young master one half of that draught; and to send to me, at Mrs. Tilson's, at Shedbury, if anything goes wrong;" and going out he mounted the horse the boy had brought, looked up to the sky, which now suffered the stars to peep out from time to time through the clouds, and rode away.

The moment he had gone Tom Brown set the bottle down upon the table, and put his forefinger to his forehead. He was a dull-looking man, with short cut black hair, like the *chevelure* of a shoe-brush; but yet there was a keen cunning light stole out of his somewhat oblique eyes when he thus set himself to consider, which had something dangerous and sinister in it.

"Three-quarters of an hour," he said, meditating, "that's well nigh an hour, may like. Howsomdever, I won't do nothing alone. I'll take advice and have help; for he might get up right, by chance, and then one would have to put him out o' pain. Nobody would know it—one knock's as good as another, and he's in such a sinash 'twouldn't be seen. He said he'd a lot o' money—I heard un, and mother, too; but he didn't say how much, so who can tell. We might take a bit, and leave some upon account. Mother could hold the candle while I took the money, and Jack stood by wi' the poker, ready to stop noise."

It was a perilous moment for Alfred Latimer, who continued to sleep soundly; and the man walking to the foot of the stairs called his mother; but in so low a voice that she did not hear.

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"I will give her no choice," answered Morton, pressing her to his heart. "She has given her promise—she has made no condition; and under no circumstances would she seek to retract it, I am sure. Indeed," he added, smiling, "I would not consent, if she did. She is fast bound, and cannot escape."

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He had gone on for some hours, and Alfred Latimer was still in a sound and comfortable sleep when the worthy surgeon was suddenly awakened by the opening of the door. He looked up, and saw the widow's son beckoning to him.

"Here's your boy, doctor, wants you quick," said the man in a low tone.

"The deuce he does," murmured the surgeon; "that Mrs. Tilson come before her time—she always does—I never saw anything like it."

It was, indeed, as he supposed; and after a brief conference with the boy at the door, he returned and looked at his patient, and then at his watch. The former was still enjoying as tranquil repose as if he had never been bruised almost to a mummy, and the latter pointed to a quarter past four.

"Wilkinson must be back in three-quarters of an hour at the farthest," said Mr. Nethersole, "and Mrs. Tilson can't wait, that's certain. No great harm can happen; for he's doing quite well, and for that matter I might just as well have been at home, and in my bed, if he had not been Mrs. Charlton's son. Here, Tom," he continued, putting his head into the next room, and speaking in a low voice to Mother Brown's son, who seemed settling himself to sleep again; "When Wilkinson returns tell him to give his young master one half of that draught; and to send to me, at Mrs. Tilson's, at Shedbury, if anything goes wrong;" and going out he mounted the horse the boy had brought, looked up to the sky, which now suffered the stars to peep out from time to time through the clouds, and rode away.

The moment he had gone Tom Brown set the bottle down upon the table, and put his forefinger to his forehead. He was a dull-looking man, with short cut black hair, like the *chevelure* of a shoe-brush; but yet there was a keen cunning light stole out of his somewhat oblique eyes when he thus set himself to consider, which had something dangerous and sinister in it.

"Three-quarters of an hour," he said, meditating, "that's well nigh an hour, may like. Howsomer, I won't do nothing alone. I'll take advice and have help; for he might get up right, by chance, and then one would have to put him out o' pain. Nobody would know it—one knock's as good as another, and he's in such a sinash 'twouldn't be seen. He said he'd a lot o' money—I heard un, and mother, too; but he didn't say how much, so who can tell. We might take a bit, and leave some upon account. Mother could hold the candle while I took the money, and Jack stood by wi' the poker, ready to stop noise."

It was a perilous moment for Alfred Latimer, who continued to sleep soundly; and the man walking to the foot of the stairs called his mother; but in so low a voice that she did not hear.

"What's the matter!" said some one in deep masculine tones. "He's not dying, is he!"

"Pooh, no!" cried Tom Brown. "Nothing like it at present; but we shall see soon. I want you, Jack Williams, and mother, too. Go and give her a shake in t'other room, and bid her come down a-tiptoe."

Jack Williams, without reply, went and woke Mother Brown, who hurried on some rags of clothes, and descended to the room where Williams and her son were already in conference. As she went down she stumbled over an iron pot which had been carelessly put at the foot of the stairs; and the pot, on being disturbed at that hour of the night, uttered a loud complaint. Alfred Latimer started, turned round, and gazed about him. The door between his room and the next had been left partly ajar, and he heard the sound of voices speaking. They were subdued; but yet many—nay, most of the words were distinct to an ear quickened by a slight degree of feverish excitement. At first, indeed, suddenly roused from sleep, he had forgotten where he was, and his whole thoughts were confused; but his mind soon cleared itself, and he heard the tongue of Mother Brown, as she was called, going pretty sharply.

"It's no use taking the flimsies," she said; "they'd be knowed and traced directly, and we should all get nabbed. But I don't see there can be any harm in seeing what yellow boys may be in his pockets. It would be spoony enough to let them go, when he'd know nothing about it. He was always a careless hand, I've heard; and he might ha' dropped 'em while they were lugging him out of the chay, or afterwards, or any how, for what he'd know."

"I'd take the flimsies, too," said her well-educated son. "If we couldn't fash them ourselves, we could get some one to do it; and if that didn't do they would be sure to be advertiaed and a reward offered, which we could send some fence to receive for us. So I'd take all—make a sweep out; and I know what!"

"Well, what do you know?" said a deep stern voice that Alfred Latimer instantly recognized as that of Jack Williams. "Let's hear what you know, Master Tom."

"Why I should not like to do anything to him sleeping," answered Tom Brown; "but it would not be a bad job if he woke just as we were about it, and got a quiet knock o' the head—a little would do it now, and no one the wiser."

"And I know what, too," answered Jack Williams aloud—"that none of you shall take a penny of his, or lay a finger on him. Why, confound you all, he's one of our own friends, and we should act like gentlemen to one another. He'll make as fine a fellow as ever lived one of these days, if a set of puling fools do not get hold of him, and preach the spirit out of him, making him as oating a hypocrite as any of themselves. But I don't think there's much chance of that. The lad's young, and has not had much experience; yet he is sharp enough, and I have seen signs of a bold strong heart in him and a determined spirit, fit to command. I'll have no pitiful tricks, Tom Brown; so, look you, Mr. Latimer is under my protection, and let any one take a penny from him if they dare."

The conversation did not only fall upon Al-

fred Latimer's ear, but sunk into his heart. The boldness with which Williams stood forward in his defence touched one of the few better points about him; and the language that he used was immediately put in strong opposition to that which Mr. Quatterly had employed. The latter had shown that, in the higher ranks of life, a reputation once even stained could never be rendered wholly pure; the latter proved that good feeling of a particular kind can be mingled with crimes and faults of a very deep die. He fancied that the door was closed upon him in one course, and that it was open in another; and that low-toned conversation which he then overheard was more injurious to every good principle than the most potent arguments could have proved, if addressed to himself directly. While he was still listening, the outer door of the cottage was heard to open, and he distinguished the voice of his mother's servant, Wilkinson. Alfred Latimer turned round, and affected to be asleep, but, in reality, he wished to meditate undisturbed over what he had just heard; a meditation more destructive to him than if the basest of the two villains had carried his worst plans into execution.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THERE was a spot in Mallington Park where the ground, approaching the river at a point where the banks were low and the stream broad and shallow, was inundated during a great part of the spring and autumn. A number of stunted willows, growing out of long sedge and rushes, covered about four acres of land, diversified here and there by tall poplars gathered into groups of five or six planted close together. This swamp might easily have been drained; but Edmonds, the park-keeper, who loved to see every variety in the domain entrusted to his charge, had refrained from doing so; and he had also another object, for as all the gamekeepers were under his orders, he took care that his lord's table should never want any species of wild fowl that the season and country afforded, and felt a pride in being able to send up to London anything that might be required. This watery piece of ground, then, was a sort of preserve during the winter months for a great number of the duck tribe; the snipe, too, was always to be found there, and not unfrequently the bittern; for the part of the park where it was situated was one very little frequented, being beyond the spot where the road we have so often mentioned turned over the bridge. A sandy path, however, neatly kept and raised a little above the neighboring ground, wound round the marsh, taking a thousand turns and bends among the trees; and then passing through a thick copse, and over two small bridges and a ferny deer pasture, it joined the broad road that led direct from the house to the great gates.

On the evening after the accident which, with its consequences, has occupied so much of our attention, about half an hour before nightfall, the graceful and delicate figure of Lucy Edmonds was observed walking along the sandy path by the side of the swamp, which at that shady hour, with the willows, the poplars, and the long flags and rushes, catching but in few places a glimpse

of the departing day, offered a dreary and melancholy scene enough. She had a basket on her arm, as if she were carrying something home from one of the cottages, of which there were two or three within the walls; and her fair face was sad, with her eyes bent down upon the ground.

I have said that she was observed; for there was one watching her; and when she came into the part of the wood where the trees closed thickest on all sides, Jack Williams walked slowly out from amongst the nearest group of poplars, and went quietly on to meet her. Lucy started on seeing him; but it was the suddenness of his appearance that alone surprised her; and her manner clearly showed that she had seen and held communication of some kind with him before.

"Ah! Mr. Williams," she said, with a faint smile crossing her lip, and flitting away again in an instant, "I did not expect to see you here."

"No, Miss Lucy," replied the man; "but I came to meet you, for I watched you out an hour ago; and I thought you would like to hear the truth of how he is going on, poor fellow."

Lucy turned towards him with a look of apprehension. "Going on!" she cried—"Poor fellow! What do you mean, Mr. Williams! Oh! tell me, what is the matter now!"

"What, have you not heard?" asked Williams; "why, it is all over Mallington. He has met with a bad accident; but don't frighten yourself; he is better, and will do well—that is, if his spirits are kept up."

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Lucy Edmonds, with the tears in her eyes. "I wish I were dead. What accident, Mr. Williams—tell me, tell me; for though I can do no good, yet I must hear."

"Why, the matter is this, Miss Lucy," replied the man, in a kindly tone—"but don't frighten yourself—he will do very well, I tell you. But the matter is this, as I was saying—I wrote him a note, you know, telling him that your father wished you to marry young Garland; and off he set from London directly. Mr. Morton, as they call him, a gentleman who has been staying down here!"

"Oh! I know him. I know him very well," replied Lucy Edmonds; "he has been several times to see my father."

"Well, he was in the chaise with Mr. Latimer," continued Williams; "and they came on at a great rate till they reached Mallington Common, about eight o'clock last night. There the horses ran away with them, and went over the bank into Mother Brown's Pit. Mr. Morton was very little hurt, but poor Alfred was taken out speechless."

The man paused, and Lucy wrung her hands in bitter grief. "But you say he is better," she cried, after a moment's silence, "you say he is better. Oh! tell me true, Mr. Williams."

"Yes, he is better," answered her companion—"a good deal better; but I know what would make him quite well."

"And what is that?" demanded Lucy Edmonds, partly divining what his answer would be.

"If you would come and see him, Miss Lucy," said Williams, "or promise to do so to-morrow;

it would do him more good than all the stuff out of Dr. Nethersole's shop."

"That is impossible," answered Lucy Edmonds, firmly; "how could I go up to Mallington House!—and besides!"

"He is not at Mallington House," replied Williams, interrupting her; "he is at Mother Brown's cottage, on the common, where he was first taken. You could come quite well, and nobody know anything of it."

"No," answered Lucy, "I promised my father that I would not see him, and I cannot—do not say a word, Mr. Williams, for nothing shall make me break my promise."

"Then you are a very silly girl," answered Williams sternly; "or else you are going to do what your father wishes, and marry young Garland. Ay, ay! Count upon a woman's love! It is no more to be leaned upon than one of those sedges. But I'll go away, and tell him to think of you, and break his heart for you, no more; for that you have got a new lover, and care no more for him."

"Oh, do not, do not be so cruel," said Lucy, weeping bitterly; "you know that what you say is not true. Tell him, if you will, not to think of me any more; for my father says he will never let him have me; so it is better that he should forget me. But do not tell him I have or can forget him, for that is false."

"Well, I will tell him what you say," replied Williams, "but he won't easily believe you love him much, if you will not come to see him even when he is lying sick. He will think that you do not wish to know how he is."

"Oh, he knows better," replied Lucy; "he knows I would give anything in this world to bear every day how he is."

"Well, I can let you know that," said Williams. "I'm sure I'd do a good deal to make you happy, Miss Lucy; and if you can come out about this place of an evening—say at this time—I will be down and tell you how he is going on as long as there is any danger, for I am lodging at Widow Brown's, and I see him very often."

"Oh, do, do," cried Lucy eagerly, "I will come whenever I can; but do not wait long for me; for my father might prevent me, or send me somewhere else, you know. But I will come whenever I can, indeed I will."

"Well, you are a good girl after all, and do love him, I believe," replied Williams.

"Oh, you know I do, too well!" answered Lucy Edmonds.

"Then you are very silly for not following your love," answered the man; "fathers have always such crutches; and if a girl did not take her own way, no girl would ever marry the man she loves. What the devil right has your father to stop you? He's not going to marry the man. If Mr. Latimer did not mean fair by you, it would be another thing; but he has offered to marry you at once—ay, and he will marry you too, whatever your father may say, for love will have its way."

"But my promise, my promise," said Lucy, with a deep sigh.

"Nonsense about promises," answered Williams, "they never hold good long against love, Lucy Edmonds. However, I will bring you word how Alfred is going on every evening."

about this time ; and you can come and hear it if you like : so now good-night, for you must not make the old folks suspicious."

Lucy bade him adieu, and, wiping the traces of tears from her eyes, walked on towards her home, little dreaming to what her promise to meet that man there might ultimately lead. Williams remained gazing after her ; and his feelings were of so strange and mixed a nature that we may well pause to look into them more closely. He gazed after Lucy Edmonds, I have said, and certainly with some admiration of her beauty ; but it was with no thought of robbing Alfred Latimer of the heart he had won, even if it had been possible ; and the only observation he made to himself was—"She's very pretty : it is a pity he should not have her." But it was not that he was without those passions which might have led him to seek to possess the fair being he thus admired ; or merely that he felt towards another in a distant land—though such was the case—that fierce eager love which often, in the most unprincipled, seems to absorb all those feelings that in less intense characters are roused by and divided amongst many ; but every one has a peculiar morality of his own ; and very often, where it is extended to the fewest possible points, it is the sternest and most inflexible upon them ; and thus the man who would not hesitate one moment to rob another of his purse, or, in case of strife, to take the life of a fellow creature like that of a dog, would have shrunk with a sense of shame from acts that thousands of well-dressed gentlemen men look upon as the amusement of a morning. He would not have wronged one whom he regarded as a friend, nor have seduced his wife, nor taken his mistress, nor traduced his character, or betrayed his confidence. These are gentlemanly crimes, which were quite out of his station and out of his character. He had his own, indeed, black and terrible ; but these he was without.

After Lucy was gone, he sat down upon the stump of a willow, and began to ponder on the future and the present. "She will make him a sweet wife," he thought, "and, though she's very different from Margeritta, yet she will suit him. If we can get together money enough to buy a schooner out there, and set ourselves up in one of those beautiful little islands, we may carry on gloriously. I can sail the ship, and he can do many things that I can't. It's just the life to suit him. I wonder if he'll consent. If we carry off pretty Lucy by force he'll be obliged ; for he must be off as fast as possible. I have him there ; and then it will be the best thing he can do. I long to see Black Jack flying over us ; but I must not let him squander away his money with Bill Malthy and such fellows. We'll have no Bill Malthy amongst us either. He's a pitiful knave—cheats at cards and dice. We'll have bold fellows, that can fight only ; and then we'll make fine work with the turbans. But he has no notion of my plan yet ; and I had better sound him. I'll tell him some stories of what happened last year at Zante, and see how he likes it. But once we've carried her off, he must go ; and then what better could he do ?"

Such were some of the thoughts of him who deserved the name of ruffian more than villain ; but there were many other ideas crossed

his mind—fleeting, transitory, and strange—sensations, rather than thoughts, making a strange mixed mass of good and of evil, of coarse fierceness and many softer emotions. The bad undoubtedly greatly predominated over the good ; but still when he thought of the bright islands of the blue *Ægean* Sea, a feeling for natural beauty, which often acts as one of the best purifiers of the heart, but which is often present even in the most stern and savage characters, gave him a thirsty longing to revisit those scenes again, even more powerful than the eager desire for active and energetic enterprise ; and without more ado he rose, made his way to the park-wall, and, leaping over it, descended the road, crossed the river, and walked on with a rapid step to the common above Mallington. A carriage was standing at the nearest point of the road to the cottage of Widow Brown, and Williams at once recognized the liveries of Mrs. Charlton. He saw, likewise, the horse of Mr. Nethersole, fat and purry as usual, notwithstanding some severe work during the preceding night and that day ; and, judging that his presence at the moment would not be very acceptable, he walked on over the common with a leisurely sauntering pace, still keeping within sight, but affecting to amuse himself with looking at the shrubs and bushes. He then descended into the pit, where he saw some people gathered about the spot where the chaise had fallen ; and he found that the little crowd which he had observed was occupied with the removal of the two dead horses in a cart from Mr. Markham's kennel. In one of the persons there assembled, however, he instantly recognized a gentleman whom he had no great inclination to meet—namely, Mr. Gibbs the traveler, with whom he had made a somewhat unpleasant acquaintance in Wonlock Wood ; but Williams was not one to suffer even consciousness to cow him, and he gazed upon the other's face with a stern and steadfast look, more like that of an injured person than of one who had committed an injury. He was very much surprised, however, when Gibbs, who when he had last met him before Dr. Western wore anything but a well-satisfied aspect, now advanced to meet him with a pleasant smirk upon his face, saying, "Ah, Mr. Williams, I am very glad to see you."

"Indeed !" said Williams, without relaxing a feature of his face ; "that is more than I can say to you. What makes you glad to see me, pray ?"

"Because, Mr. Williams," replied the traveler, "I always like to do justice ; and though, when I last beheld you, I thought you were very like the man who knocked me down and rubbed me on the other side of the water, I am now convinced that I was quite mistaken, and that you had nothing to do with it."

There were plenty of persons present to overhear this speech ; and Williams replied, dryly, "Oh, you are, are you ? Well, better late than never ; but let it teach you not to suspect innocent people again. I should like to hear, however, what it is has convinced you at last. I've neither grown taller nor shorter, have not shaved off my whiskers, nor cut off my hair."

"Ah, sir, if you would but use a little of the fine Exotic Balm of Trinidad," cried Mr. Gibbs,

"It would so improve the curl and the gloss both of your hair and your whiskers you would scarcely know yourself. I have supplied three shops in this town, and you can get it either at Mr. Shanklin's, or the Miss Martins', or Mr. Warren's—but you were asking what had convinced me? I will tell you in a moment. In the first place the man must have been a good deal taller than you; in the next place, he wore different shoes; and, in the third place, I find you changed a five pound note that very day at the inn, and another yesterday at the linen-drapers'. Now, no notes were taken from me; and a man is not likely to take another man's money when his own pockets are full."

"He may want to fill them fuller," answered Williams, in a different tone, "so that's no reason, Mr. What's-your-name; but as for me, I got my pay and prize money when my ship was paid off; so I had enough of my own for the time being; but when it is all spent, if you will tell me which way you are going with a good lot of gold about you, I'll see what I can do with yours."

He spoke laughing, and Mr. Gibbs laughed, too—quite heartily. Nay, he even added, "Well, I did you injustice, Mr. Williams; I beg your pardon for it frankly, and as it is growing dark, if you will come down to the Bagpipes we will have a bowl of punch together and forget all grievances."

"I can't just now," answered Williams; "but I will to-morrow night if you like."

Mr. Gibbs agreed to this change of his proposed plan, and Williams, seeing the top of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, the sight of which he just caught over the bank, moving rapidly away, turned upon his heel and entered the cottage.

Several of the persons who had overheard this conversation stared at Mr. Gibbs; and one of them, a surly carter, who knew Jack Williams well, uttered in a murmur between his teeth—what was probably the internal opinion of all—"Well, you're a fool, if ever there was one;" but in this instance, at least, Mr. Gibbs was not such a fool as people thought. The cart moved off with the two dead horses; and the people, who had been gathered round, followed it. Mr. Gibbs remained for a moment or two behind, then stooping down, as if to tie his shoe, he pulled something out from beneath a bramble bush, scratching himself a good deal as he did so; and then climbing the bank, he paused as soon as he got into the clearer light which the higher ground afforded, examined something which he held in his hand attentively, and walked straight away to Mallington House.

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. MORTON was dressing for dinner, when a servant entered his room, saying, "There is a person below, sir, who wishes to speak with you directly upon business of importance."

"Indeed!" said Morton calmly, "did he give his name?"

"He said his name is Gibbs, sir," answered the footman, "and that he would not detain you a minute."

"I know no such person," replied the young

gentleman, looking at his watch; "however, as there is time, tell him that I am dressing; but if his business be of real importance, he can see me here. If not, let him call to-morrow."

The man retired, and in two or three minutes returned, ushering in Mr. Gibbs. As soon as Morton beheld the face of his visitor, he recollected the intrusive personage whom he had seen on the bank of the river; and he regretted having given him admission at that moment, when there was a chance of conversing with Louisa alone for a short time before Mrs. Charlton came down. He resolved to cut the interview short, however; and merely bending his head, he inquired what was Mr. Gibbs's business with him.

Mr. Gibbs in return bowed low, very low, indeed; and then hemmed and bowed again, while the servant shut the door and retired.

"Well, sir," said Morton, waxing somewhat impatient.

"My name is Gibbs, sir," rejoined the other with a most agreeable smile, "and yours is Morton."

The young gentleman bowed his head.

"This pocket-book, then, I suppose, belongs to you," said Mr. Gibbs, in reply to this mute assent.

Morton started and turned around, "Yes, sir, it does," he said, "I must have dropped it in getting out of the chaise last night—it is very strange I did not miss it."

It would, indeed, have been strange, if he had not been so near Louisa Charlton; but that altered the whole case, and Morton might have dropped many a more valuable thing without missing it during the whole of that day. Mr. Gibbs placed the wetted and soiled book in its owner's hands, with another low bow, adding, in a marked and peculiar tone, "I was obliged, sir, to open it and examine the contents, to ascertain to whom it belonged."

This intimation, from some cause or other, seemed to give Morton cause for thought; but at length looking up with a light and half laughing look, he replied, "I understand what you mean, Mr. Gibbs; and all I can say is, that I must trust to your discretion, which, if it prove stable, shall not go unrewarded."

"Pray, do not mention such a thing, sir," replied Mr. Gibbs, "my discretion you may fully trust to without any reward; and, indeed, there is a subject on which I have wished to speak to you for two or three days, which will show you how discreet I can be."

"I think I must ask you to choose another time, Mr. Gibbs," replied Morton, looking again at his watch. "I must go down as soon as I am dressed."

"When you please, sir," answered the traveler, "but, before you are dressed, I can give you an inkling of the matter. I think you take a good deal of interest in the family of a park-keeper over the river, named Edmonds."

"I do, certainly," said Morton, "he is a very good, respectable man."

"And his daughter, I believe, sir," rejoined Mr. Gibbs.

Morton drew up his head, and looked at his companion in some surprise. "I do not understand your meaning, sir," he answered. "I

have once, or perhaps twice, seen his daughter, but I take no other interest in her than in the rest of his family. Pray explain yourself."

"Why, I thought, sir—I thought," replied Mr. Gibbs, hesitating, "I thought I saw you—I am sure it was a gentleman—speaking with her for nearly an hour about a fortnight ago—it might be a few days more or less—in the park; and he came from this house, and went back to this house; and now I thought—that is to say I suspected—I mean I imagined, that it might be interesting to him to know that she is in the custom of meeting—that is to say I am sure she has met four days ago, and to-night, too, a man named Williams, who was supposed—that is to say accused, or suspected of knocking me down and rubbing me in Wenlock Wood, when I was here last."

Now, all this information was interesting to Mr. Morton; for it gave him a clue to part of Alfred Latimer's conduct—at least he thought so; and before answering, he pondered for a moment or two, uncertain how to act. He wished much to know what was the exact degree of intimacy between Alfred Latimer and Lucy Edmonds; and he doubted not in the least it was Mrs. Charlton's son who had been mistaken for himself. The facts of having seen Williams, whose name had been mentioned in his hearing, at the cottage of Widow Brown—of the man's meeting that night with Lucy—and of their preceding interview four days before, connected themselves with the letter Alfred Latimer had received, and with his eagerness to return to Mallington immediately after its delivery. In the ordinary affairs of life, as in the deep secrets of science, we often, by the leaping pole of imagination, jump at just conclusions before we can be said to have discovered them; and I believe no man ever proved a great fact which he had not first surmised. With Morton all was at present fancy—it was a conjectural collocation of circumstances; and the proof was yet to be obtained. But how? was the difficult question. To act as a spy, or to employ a spy upon any other man's actions, was not to be thought of, however great and beneficent might be the end in view. He was one of those men who think that no end justifies base means: and he resolved to inquire no further—to let matters take their course, evolve themselves as they would; and at the same time to employ the information he had received as occasion might require.

"In the first place, Mr. Gibbs," he replied, when his cogitations came to an end, "let me inform you that you are mistaken in supposing that I am the person whom you saw talking with Lucy Edmonds. I never spoke to her out of her father's house in my life, and at the time you mention was not a visitor here. May I ask how near you were to the person you supposed to be me, for you have certainly made a great mistake?"

"Oh dear, sir, I was a long way off," replied Mr. Gibbs. "I was at the top of the house, amusing myself, as I usually do, with this little instrument," and he pulled out a small telescope from his pocket. "From the window of my room," he continued, "I command the park on one side, and the hill up to the common on the other, and I see all that goes on in the place."

"I should not think it very profitable, or very worthy inquiry, sir," replied Morton; "but every man has his tastes, and, as meddling with other people's business is not one of mine, I can have nothing further to do with the matter you have mentioned—except, indeed, to say that it would be, I think, but an act of Christian charity to warn poor Edmonds that his daughter is placing herself in dangerous circumstances. That would be drawing some good from perquisitions which I cannot advise you to pursue farther."

"You mistake, sir—you mistake—allow me very respectfully to say you mistake," said Mr. Gibbs, with some warmth: "you must allow me, sir, to clear myself, although you are dressed, I see. I do not use my telescope for the purpose of prying into other people's affairs, though I can't help seeing them if they come in my way. But, sir, the truth is this: I have been knocked down, and robbed near here. We could not identify the man; but I am not only quite sure of who he is, but also that there is a gang of very bad characters here, who will some day or another do great mischief; and I am resolved to bring them to justice. I have fixed my eye upon a particular man, sir; and he shall find that he can't escape that eye. I watch him and his doings every moment I have to spare, and ere long I shall get hold of the end of the clue, though he may hide it ever so cunningly."

"That alters the case very materially, Mr. Gibbs," replied Morton; "and I trust that you will succeed in your endeavors; but in regard to this poor girl it would, I think, be an act of kindness on your part to speak with her father upon the subject, and leave it to him to take such steps as he may think fit. He is, as far as I can learn, a very high-principled right-minded man, and I do not think would act harshly towards his child."

"May I ask, sir," said Mr. Gibbs, in a low tone, "whether he is acquainted or not with certain circumstances—I wish to act discreetly, sir—quite discreetly, and would not for the world betray a secret which had accidentally fallen into my possession."

"You are quite right, Mr. Gibbs," said Morton; "but to answer your question: he is not aware of anything—no one, indeed, is. The matter is of no great consequence, indeed; but every man has his whim."

"Oh, certainly, sir—certainly," said Mr. Gibbs; "but I won't detain you longer, sir; and if you have any further commands for me you will find me at the inn, sir; for I have determined not to quit this place till I have got the right sow by the ear. But you cannot think, sir, what an advantage it would be to your hair if you would use Grimsditch's incomparable Balm of Trinidad. It preserves and increases the natural curl—prevents it from falling off, or turning grey—communicates to it an admirable gloss, keeps it always, whether in rain or heat, in perfect order—and whether applied to the clustering ringlets of female loveliness, or to the holder waves that float round the forehead of masculine beauty, it is admitted on all hands to be the only thing yet discovered which can be said to gild refined gold, and render perfection still more perfect."

"Well, send me some, Mr. Gibbs," replied Morton, smiling; "and now indeed I must go, for I fear I am already late."

Mr. Gibbs made his bow, and retired; and Morton hastened down to the drawing-room, but was disappointed in his hope of finding Louisa alone. Mrs. Charlton was, indeed, not yet down; but Dr. Western was seated on the sofa by the side of his fair ward. Morton would willingly have seen him ten minutes later, and though he shook the good clergyman's hand warmly, yet the rector very well understood his sensations.

"Ah, my young friend," he said, with a laughing look towards Louisa, which made the color come up into her cheek. "I am very much in the way here, but I wanted to speak to you, so I came early, even at the risk of being the unfortunate third. Nay, Louisa, do not be angry with me, my dear child," he continued, seeing her rising as if she received what he had said as a hint to leave them. "You know I am the friend of both, and give my hearty consent and approval; so if you run away, I shall think that you wish to hide your arrangements from me. I have nothing to say to him that you may not hear, though, perhaps, the confidence is not quite reciprocal. Morton, have you done what you said you would?"

"No, my dear sir," replied Morton, "I have had no time. All to-day we have been in the strait waistcoat of society, and yesterday, while we were five minutes alone together, we somehow talked of other things."

"Oh! I know how quite well," answered Dr. Western; "but time!—what need of time!—one minute will do it. My dear Louisa, let me introduce a friend of mine to you;" and leading Morton up to her, with a gay look he whispered a word in her ear.

Louisa Charlton drew back, and gazed in Morton's face with an expression of surprise almost amounting to alarm. But Morton, notwithstanding the good doctor's presence, threw his arms round her, saying, "Nay, my beloved, can a name make any difference to you?"

"No," murmured Louisa, "oh, no; but this takes me very much by surprise."

"Our good friend here is wrong," said Morton, "in telling you thus, dear Louisa. Nay, he is wrong in telling you at all as yet; for all is not settled, and I wished it to be so fully before I spoke."

"It is you who are wrong, Morton," replied Dr. Western, "the parson of the parish is always right. There should be no secrets between two people circumstanced as you are. Nay, more, I have to tell you, sir, that all is settled, as I will prove to you if you will come and partake of a plain dinner with me to-morrow, at five, and then take a long walk. Louisa shall share the dinner, if she will, but not the ramble; and in the meantime, ma'am, remember that though I have taken the liberty of telling you other people's secrets, you are not to follow my bad example."

As he spoke, Mrs. Charlton entered the room, and found Morton, Louisa, and Dr. Western standing close together, with somewhat too evident symptoms of having been engaged in secret conclave. She made no observation, in-

deed; but a slight smile, somewhat sarcastic and triumphant, crossed her lip, as if she would have said, had she thought fit to speak what was passing within, "Ah, you think that I am blind; but you are playing my game, while you imagine you are playing your own." Morton marked it ere it fled; but, confident in his own rectitude, both in motive and act, he felt no embarrassment or confusion, and only asked himself in consequence of what he saw, "When will this worthy lady suffer her object to appear. She shall take her own course," he added in his own mind, "for it is well to know thoroughly a person with whom one is to be so closely connected."

Dr. Western, on his part, met the lady with a good-humored and easy smile, telling her that "he had asked Miss Charlton and Mr. Morton to dine with him on the following day, and trusted she would be of the party."

"I suppose, in propriety, I ought to be," replied Mrs. Charlton; "but really, my dear sir, I have so many accounts to look over, and different other things to do, that Louisa must do without a chaperon for once, especially when she is going to her guardian's house. Alfred tells me that you have been to see him, doctor, for which I am very much obliged."

"I thought it a duty, my dear lady," replied Dr. Western; "the accounts that reached me were so alarming that I feared I should find him very ill. There is little the matter, however, but a few bruises, as far as I could discover; and I should think you could bring him home quite safely to-morrow."

"Do you really think so?" asked Mrs. Charlton, in a tone of surprise.

"I think that the sooner he is out of that house the better," replied the rector; "the people there are amongst the worst in the parish, and I know this: I myself would sooner risk a fever than sleep there for a single night."

Before Mrs. Charlton could reply, the door was thrown open to announce dinner, and the rector, advancing, gave her his arm, while Morton followed with Louisa. What was it he whispered to her as they went down stairs? Can you not divine, reader? Then you have never been in love in all your life.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MOTHER BROWN's cottage was certainly by no means a pleasant place—on the contrary, it was a very unpleasant place indeed, and yet thither must I once more lead the gentle reader, though I have no intention of dirtying the shoes of his imagination more than I can help in guiding him on his way.

In the outer chamber of the cottage, which, as the reader is aware, was divided into four rooms, two above and two below, and by the side of the large ill-constructed chimney, sat Tom Brown, the widow's son, with an old yellow greasy tobacco pipe in his mouth, puffing away clouds of no very fragrant smoke, and gazing vacantly into the fireplace, where, over a handful of small drift coal, apparently of not the most combustible nature in the world, stood a large iron pot, emitting an odor of turpentine and

onions. There was something dull and yet fierce in the man's look: a dogged sullen brutality, more revolting to look upon than even the expression of more dangerous qualities, when lighted up by the beams of intellect and the fire of passion. He was a powerful fellow, as I have before described him; with a head immensely capacious and round behind; but so low and narrow in the forehead that his bristly hair reached within a finger's length of his eyebrows; and as he sat there, though sometimes a momentary smile would change the expression of his dull face, yet in general a heavy frown still further contracted that meaningless and animal forehead. It is not necessary to inquire what emotions produced either the frown or the smile—certain it is that they could be of no very refined kind; but their course was soon after interrupted by the entrance of Williams, who spoke with him for a moment or two by the fire, and then turned towards the door which led into the inner chamber.

"Ah!" said Tom Brown, "there he lies on his back, like a dead crow, when he is just as well as you or I, Jack. Well, I shall go and take a walk—I wonder what the devil he keeps lying there for!"

"He knows what he's about," answered Williams; "but don't you go far, Tom, for we may want you. Where's your mother?"

"Oh, she's gone down to Mallington to buy some pork," replied her son. "I shan't be further than the top of the common; but I think there may be a rabbit or two by this time;" and thus saying he walked out of the door and closed it behind him.

Jack Williams in the meantime entered the room where Alfred Latimer lay; and the moment that he appeared the young gentleman started up in his bed, without any sign of pain or sickness, exclaiming, "Well, I'm devilish glad you've come at last; I thought you'd never be here."

"Why, I had a good deal to do," said Williams, "and one can't manage obstinate people in a minute, Mr. Latimer; and a precious pig-headed set they are about Mallington—no turning them at all."

"Ay, that's what my mother said of me this morning," rejoined the young gentleman. "She was over here with the carriage, by eleven, and wanted me to go back to the house; for she and that old fool Western have been laying their heads together, and settling that this was a very bad place for me to stay in, so that, fever or no fever, I ought to be brought over to Mallington, like a sick boy from school. I wouldn't go, however; and then, just to drive me, she said she couldn't spare Wilkinson any longer."

"What did you say to that?" demanded Jack Williams.

"Why, I said I could spare him very well," answered Alfred Latimer; "and so sent him about his business, glad enough to get rid of him. I promised to come over to-morrow, however; so whatever is to be done must be done to-night."

"Oh, I've got all ready," replied Jack Williams, "if you are strong enough."

"I'm quite well," replied Alfred Latimer. "There's nothing the matter with me; but I've been thinking, Jack, how the deuce we shall get

her across the water and through the village without people seeing. She will never be able to walk to the other bridge."

"To be sure not," answered Williams; "that's what has kept me such a time; for I couldn't hire a punt, all I could do. One fellow said he was sure I was going to poach the river, and he might have his boat seized. However, at last I got hold of young Blackmore, who promised to draw his father's punt in amongst the reeds there; then we can get across in the dusk, without being seen, and have her up to the cottage at Illington in no time. But mind, Mr. Latimer, you're to marry her, you know."

"Oh, ah! I'll marry her," replied Alfred Latimer; "I'll marry her, don't you be afraid."

"No, I'm not afraid," replied Williams; "for I wouldn't help you, if I thought you'd cheat her; and having given me your promise, I look to you to keep it. So, as that's settled, I've got a pack of things for you here in the bundle that will make you look as much like a gamekeeper as possible, leather leggings and all; and if you start over the back way just before dusk, you'll find me down by the water. We must get Tom Brown, however, to stay in the boat while we are in the park. It will be awkward, however, if she doesn't come, since you have promised to go home to-morrow."

"If she doesn't I won't go," replied Alfred Latimer. "It will do well enough and nobody suspect anything, while I am lying here and supposed to be ill; but if I were up at Mallington House, and going about, they'd say directly I had taken her—but she'll come, I think."

"So do I," answered Williams; "but there's Tom Brown come back; I hear his step; and we had better speak to him about it at once."

Thus saying he opened the door that led to the other room; but the man he looked for was not there, and returning to Alfred Latimer's bedside, he sat down again and pursued the conversation in which they were engaged. In about ten minutes, however, the step of Tom Brown was heard distinctly crossing the floor of the next room in haste, and the moment after he opened the door and put his head in, saying, "I say, Mr. Williams, have you been talking loud with that window open; for there's been a d—d fellow hanging about on the outside listening, or I'm mistaken."

Williams started up with a heavy brow, with out any reply, and, running to the window, looked forth.

"He's gone, he's gone," said Tom Brown; "as soon as he saw me come down the hill he was off like a shot."

"Do you know him?" asked Williams.

"I'm not quite sure," answered Brown, "but I think, by the look of him, that it was that dancing-master-looking cove who got his head broke and lost his money one day."

"He may get his head broken to better purpose if he comes listening here," said Williams, and then fell into a train of thought, from which he was roused after a moment or two by Alfred Latimer exclaiming, "Why, if he has heard all, our scheme will be blown over the whole place."

"No, no," answered his companion, "he did not hear enough for that. No names were mentioned, you know; and he couldn't make

out much of it. However, Tom, you run down to the bridge, and see whether he crosses or not. If we can make sure of him till five o'clock, I'll take care of him after that. He shan't blab till the thing is done, at all events."

"You stay there till Williams comes down to you," said Alfred Latimer, "and I'll give you five shillings for your pains, Brown."

Now, people's estimation of their conscience is very different in different individuals; but, unlike the appreciation of any other thing, the less a man has of it the less value does he place upon it. What is there on earth that Tom Brown would not have done for five shillings? As to selling his soul, that was no great matter; for, notwithstanding all that Dr. Western could do, he was not quite sure whether he possessed a soul or not; and if he had, the property undoubtedly was deeply mortgaged. But he would have taken the life of another and put his own neck in jeopardy at any time for a pound, and would have risked Botany Bay, the hulks or the pillory, for any of the aliquot parts of the same sum. To watch for a man upon a bridge, therefore, was no very troublesome task; and yet, to say the truth, he would rather have stolen a sheep or a deer, or robbed a garden or a hen-roost: for in the great commerce of this world, whatever Adam Smith may say, there are a great many other kinds of circulating medium besides money; and often a man who undertakes a bad action for a small bribe, ekes out his pitiful pay with excitement. Though there was none of this, however, in the task assigned to him, he agreed to do as he was bid, and set off at once with so rapid a step that he overtook Mr. Gibbs half way down the hill, and saw him enter the inn, before he took his station on the bridge. The guard he kept was uninterrupted, for whether it was that the worthy traveler was conscious of being watched, or whether he had some other occupation which kept him within, he did not issue forth again till the figure of Jack Williams was seen walking with a slow pace, and the usual swinging gait of a sailor, down towards the side of the river. No verbal communication took place between the two, but the thumb pointed back over the right shoulder, indicated to Tom Brown that he was to go back to the cottage, and Williams, walking into the inn, asked if Mr. Gibbs was at home. The landlady, the oater, and the barnaid, all looked at Jack Williams with a sort of shy and unpleasant aspect, which certainly was not very encouraging; but Mrs. Pluckrose replied civilly that she believed the gentleman was in, and went to see; while Williams turned his back to the bar, looked out at the door, and twisted a cane switch which he held in his hand into a variety of curious forms.

While pausing there, he saw the carriage of Mrs. Charlton going down the hill towards the rectory, with the sweet countenance of Louisa sitting calmly beside Mr. Morton, very apparent through the windows. There might be a slight glow upon her cheek; but she did not seem at all anxious to avoid being seen thus publicly with her lover; and Williams himself, as well as the two Misses Martin, and Messrs. Crump and Dixon, looked upon the approaching wedding as a settled thing.

"Well, I declare!" cried Miss Mathilda Martin.

"Bold enough, truly," said Miss Martin; "but what could be expected with such a step-mother?"

"I think his impudence is worse than hers," rejoined Mathilda. "A poor pitiful painter, to set himself up riding in a carriage beside an heiress like that! I declare I've a great mind to write and tell the other guardian, in an anonymous kind of way, what Mrs. Charlton is encouraging and Dr. Western suffering."

"Wait a little, Matty," said her sister; "the good lady is a deep one, and we have not seen the end of it yet."

Before this interesting conversation had come to its conclusion, Mr. Williams had been introduced into the chamber of Mr. Gibbs, and a bowl of punch had been ordered, which speedily appeared. Mr. Gibbs, who paid with a degree of regularity for everything he bought which he often wished that others would imitate, drew forth a ten-pound note, and asked the maid who brought the punch to change it; and on her returning with Abraham Newland's promise-to-pay unchanged, he applied to his new companion, but without success. Williams, for some reason, declared that he had no change, though his pocket was very heavy, and the girl civilly insisting that there was no hurry, Mr. Gibbs was obliged to desist. He was courtesy itself to his guest—he lied him with punch, he talked to him incessantly, he mingled soft allusions to the fragrant Balm of Trinidad with expressions of regret at having ever been betrayed into the folly of thinking that a seafaring gentleman like Mr. John Williams could have committed a highway robbery. Then he talked of Mallington, and all the places round Mallington; and then he spoke of his young friend, Mr. Maltby, and assured his companion that he had endeavored to bring him to their little party that night, but had not been fortunate enough to find him, expressing a firm conviction that Mr. Williams would be delighted with his acquaintance.

Williams listened to him with grim gravity; nothing that Mr. Gibbs could say could move him to more than a sardonic smile; and when the worthy traveler commended Bill Maltby, he merely replied that he had known him very well when he was a youth, and asked where he "hung out" now. In short, Jack Williams was an old bird, and was not to be caught with chaff such as Mr. Gibbs threw down before him. On the Balm of Trinidad, however, he was somewhat more discursive; and when they had well nigh got to the bottom of their bowl of punch, he began to twist upon his finger the long ringlets that hung over his whiskers, and inquired particularly into the merits of that fragrant essence. It was a subject upon which Mr. Gibbs was eloquent, and he enumerated some nineteen or twenty of its admirable qualities, some of them diametrically opposed to the others, till at length Mr. Williams felt in his pocket and asked the price, producing at the same time a crown piece. The ruling passion strong in death showed Mr. Gibbs the opportunity of doing a little business, and, unable to resist, he said, "The retail price was, in truth, seven-and-sixpence, but he would pass it to his friend Mr. Williams at the wholesale rate of five shillings."

"Well, then, let us have a bottle!" exclaimed Jack Williams, giving another cockcomb twist to the corkscrow curl.

Immediately Mr. Gibbs started up from the table; and approaching a large leather-covered brass-banded case, which stood in the window, he dived into the interior thereof to bring up a bottle of the Balm of Trinidad. As he was doing so he heard the ladle rattle in the bowl, and turned his head round, when he saw Mr. Williams helping himself to some more punch.

"I've taken the liberty, Mr. Gibbs," said Jack Williams, in a slow tone, "to drink your health during your absence. Shall I fill your glass to return thanks?"

"Thank you, I'm coming back directly," said Mr. Gibbs; and, returning to the table, he presented his companion with a bottle of the fragrant balm, wrapped up in gold paper, received his crown piece, and, filling himself a glass of punch—it was well nigh the last that the bowl contained—he drank it off.

Jack Williams in the meanwhile went on sipping his own, opening the bottle of the fragrant balm, pulling out the cork, and smelling the odor with the air of a connoisseur. Mr. Gibbs then proposed another bowl, and Mr. Williams readily consented. The maid was summoned, the empty vessel carried away, and another replete with fragrant liquor speedily placed upon the table. By this time, however, the eyes of Mr. Gibbs had acquired a somewhat glassy and lackadaisical expression. He helped himself and his guest, however, and tossed off his own glass; but then his eyelids seemed to grow heavy, and in a few minutes he began to nod; upon which Jack Williams gave him a meaning smile, and taking up the bowl, half emptied it at a draught. He then sat for about half an hour longer to watch the progress of his entertainer's sleep. It was sound and apparently comfortable, and Jack Williams more than once rubbed his finger on the corner of his brow and temple, as if considering what was to be done next.

The Caliph Haroun Alraschid had a certain powder—we are informed in one of the most veracious of all possible histories—of which, when he wished to send any of his friends to sleep, he used to take a pinch and drop it into their wine or sherbet, as the case might be, and instantly they fell into a pleasant doze, during the continuance of which the aforesaid potentate used to do with them whatsoever he thought fit. Now, whether Jack Williams, in his travels in the East, had possessed himself or not of the caliph's secret, certain it is that he intended Mr. Gibbs to go to sleep, and that Mr. Gibbs dutifully complied with his desire. At length, as the sky was beginning to get a little grey, Williams rose, and taking up the worthy traveler in his arms, laid him quietly on his bed; then descending the stairs he stopped a minute at the bar, saying to Mrs. Pluckrose, "You've made that punch devilish strong, marm, and Gibbs has got us drunk as an owl."

"Good gracious me!" cried the worthy landlady, "I hope he's not noisy."

"Oh no," answered Williams, "he's fallen sound asleep, and left me to drink out the bowl; but I find my head queerish, too, and so I'll

have no more of it. Good night, marm," and away he went.

Mrs. Pluckrose and the maid immediately proceeded to ascertain the facts of the case; and finding the worthy traveler stretched upon his bed, apparently in a state of drunken sleep, they left him there, only taking the precaution of putting some towels under his boots that they might not dirt the counterpane.

It was well nigh two o'clock next day before Mr. Gibbs woke; and then he was mightily sick at his stomach, and his head was aching in a very unpleasant manner. He vowed, however, that he had not been drunk at all; but this only confirmed the good landlady's belief in his inebriety of the night before, for she had remarked on more than one occasion amongst her guests, and also in the case of her dear departed lord and master, that no man is ever so convinced of having been thoroughly sober, as when he has been thoroughly tipsy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

It was a very pleasant little drive from Mallington House to the rectory, both for Edmond Morton and Louisa Charlton, and yet it would be very difficult to say in what its pleasantness consisted. They spoke very little, so that it could not be in conversation. They were aware that the eyes of the villagers were upon them, and therefore it was not in what is commonly called making love. Louisa felt a little awkwardness in thus first appearing with her lover alone, and therefore it was not in that ease and freedom from restraint which in itself is an enjoyment. It could only be, then, in being together, but that was something, and something very pleasant too. It connected itself by the fine links of thought with a future, when they should be always together—when heart and hand united, and yet separate, they should go along the varied paths of life, mutually enjoying the sunshine, and cheering each other in the shade.

As the picture rose up to the eye of hope, and fancy watered the flowers of the future, Louisa once or twice raised her beautiful confiding eyes to her lover's face, and read in it a promise of happiness that she felt sure would never be belied; and Morton, as if he read every thought that was passing within, and sought to confirm the happy confident dream of fancy, laid his hand gently upon hers without uttering a word, but with the silent voice of the eyes, more convincing than oaths or protestations.

When they reached the rectory, strange to say, both were more at ease in their demeanor to each other than they had been when alone. Dr. Western knew their love, and they were aware that Mrs. Evelyn knew it too, so there was no need of concealment, and there was none. They were both too bright and fine minded, indeed, to let the passion in their hearts obtrude itself upon the notice of others—but yet it was pleasant, very pleasant, so to feel, and so to act, beneath the eyes of those who knew and approved; and the quiet simple dinner at the rectory passed over in calm and pleasant conversation, natural, straight-forward, true, affording a strange contrast to the somewhat labored and artificial

sort of life which had established itself at Mallington House since Mrs. Charlton had become its mistress.

As soon as dinner was over, Dr. Western proposed to his young friend that they should set out upon their walk; and having taken their hats and sticks, they issued forth from the rectory, and bent their steps towards the bridge. It was a calm and placid evening, with the sun already low behind the trees, though where the woody screen fell away in parts, the glowing sky beyond showed that the orb of day was still above the horizon. The river lay calm and flooded with light, beneath them, as they passed over towards the gates of the park, and as they paused for a moment to gaze down upon the reflection of the banks in the water, they saw a boat pushed across from one side of the stream to the other, above half a mile lower down. There was nothing, however, to attract their attention in the appearance of the boat, and after a few words on the beauty of the scene, they pursued their way through the gates up towards the hall. Their conversation as they went seemed grave and earnest: more than once the clergyman and his companion stopped; and the outstretched finger and eager look showed that the subject discussed was one of interest to both. At length, however, when within about five hundred yards of the house, they turned from their course, and bent their steps towards the park-keeper's cottage, which they reached just as the sun set. Opening the door, without ceremony, Dr. Western led the way in, and looked around; but the only person the little room contained was Mrs. Edmonds, busily engaged in preparing supper for her husband and children. She smiled and courtesied on seeing the rector; and, in reply to his question, said that Edmonds was up at the hall, having gone to speak with Mrs. Chalke, the housekeeper, in regard to some men who had been seen prowling about. Dr. Western sat down for a minute or two, and inquired in a careless tone for his young friends, Lucy and John.

"Oh, John is tending the fowls," replied the mother; "and Lucy has gone down with a few eggs to poor Janet Hazlewood: she is late this evening. I wish she would come back."

"She should be in before dark, Mrs. Edmonds," said Dr. Western, in a grave tone; "and as you say that there are strange men about the place, if you would take my advice, you would send her brother with her for a day or two, whenever she goes out."

"I will, sir," replied the park-keeper's wife.

She looked earnestly in the rector's face, as if there were questions she would fain have asked; but either from timidity, or some vague apprehension, she did not put them; and soon after Dr. Western and his young companion bade her good evening, and walked back towards the hall. It was now nearly dark, and a twinkling star was here and there appearing in the sky, when suddenly Morton stopped, and said, "I thought I heard a scream."

"I heard a jay in the wood," replied Dr. Western; but nevertheless they waited and listened. No other sound, however, broke the silence of the air, and, after pausing for a few moments, they followed the path to the house. The great door of the hall was opened for them

by Edmonds himself; but although they had been down to his house to seek him, neither of the two gentlemen seemed to have any particular matter to communicate, for they merely told him to bring them a light into the library, and turned their steps thither themselves.

"I will see him to-morrow," said Dr. Western, "and tell him privately, when I can admonish him a little; for though an excellent man, there is a certain degree of sternness about him which might drive the poor child to further imprudence, if not to evil."

A minute after Edmonds entered with a light, and merely saying to Morton in a respectful tone that he would wait till that gentleman was at leisure, for he wished to speak with him for a moment, the park-keeper retired and shut the door. The dim light of the tallow candle which had been brought penetrated with difficulty the obscurity of the large old fashioned room, and glared faintly upon the backs of innumerable volumes on the shelves. Dr. Western, however, walked direct to one corner of the library, and took down a thick quarto on which was inscribed the words "History of ———shire."

"Oh, I have seen that, my dear sir," said Morton, with a smile; "I looked all through it before I left London, but it throws no light upon that part of the subject."

"What an impatient thing is youth," replied the worthy clergyman, "and how it jumps to conclusions!" and laying down the book upon the long table, he opened it and turned over several pages. Besides the printed matter which it contained, there was now displayed upon the broad margin numerous annotations, written in a small clear hand, and each signed by a single name. Between the leaves, too, were several scraps of written paper, some of which Morton barely looked at and passed over; but at one he paused, and read the whole contents with great attention, and then, turning to Dr. Western, he shook him by the hand, saying, "This is all that could be desired, indeed! How, in the name of good fortune, did you discover it, my dear sir?"

"By a very simple process," replied Dr. Western; "my predecessor at Mallington was a great antiquarian and genealogist. At his death I bought his books, and amongst the rest there fell into my hands a manuscript account of this part of the country. On looking in that, to see if I could find a clue to what you wanted to obtain, I met with numerous references to this book, and especially to the notes and memoranda of Lord Mallington, after this fashion; 'In history of ———shire, Mallington Park Library: the earl's MS. illustrations.' I came up yesterday morning, and very soon satisfied myself that here was the information required."

"I must have a copy of this!" said Morton; who, like many another man, had fallen into a fit of musing upon a very different subject, while listening to an explanation which he had himself desired. "I suppose that it would be hardly justifiable to take the original."

"I do not see why," replied Dr. Western; "but as a copy will do as well, you had better keep on the right side. We will get a pen and ink, and then half an hour will suffice to transcribe it."

Dr. Western moved towards the door as he

spoke, but ere he reached it, Edmonds, the park-keeper, entered with a face a little pale, and that expression in his eyes which can only be called intense anxiety. "I am afraid, sir, I must go away," he said, addressing Morton, "for my boy has just come up to tell me that Lucy is not yet at home—I don't understand it, sir—I must go and see."

He evidently strove to speak calmly, but the father's apprehensions would have way, and his voice trembled, and his lip quivered, while he mentioned the intelligence he had received. Dr. Western and Morton looked at each other with a grave and meaning glance; and Morton, closing the book before them, said, in a low tone of voice, to the rector, "We can do this to-morrow. Let us go with him. He may need support and assistance."

Dr. Western nodded his head, and, turning towards the park-keeper, said, in as easy a tone as he could assume, "We will go with you, Edmonds; but don't make yourself uneasy, my good man. Your wife told us that Lucy had gone down to poor old Janet Hazlewood's. Something may have occurred to detain her."

The man looked earnestly in Dr. Western's face, but he made no reply, for there was suspicion in his heart which he did not dare utter to any one else till it grew into certainty. The good old housekeeper, who had followed him into the hall, took the candle and closed the door after they had gone out; and, directing their course across the park towards a spot where the trees came nearly down to the river side, about two hundred yards' distance from the gates, they turned towards the marshy piece of ground where Williams and Lucy Edmonds had met the day before.

"Is there no other path she could have taken in coming home," asked Morton, speaking to Edmonds, who had not uttered a word since they had left the hall; but with his eyes bent forward to see if he could catch a glimpse of her coming form through the darkness of the night, had gone on in silence a few steps before the two gentlemen.

"She might take the gravel walk there that runs through the trees above," said Edmonds, "but I don't think it likely, sir."

"Then I will go that way," said Morton; "where does it join the other path?"

"Close by the osiers, sir," answered the park-keeper; and Morton, turning away, hurried on to the spot where the gravel walk which Edmonds had mentioned entered the thicker wood, and then pursued it as fast as he could go till it came to the side of the swamp. During the last thirty or forty yards, he could hear the voices of Dr. Western and the park-keeper speaking earnestly together, but they ceased as soon as he joined them, and examining the ground to the right and the left as they proceeded, the whole party walked on till they came to the park-wall. There was no gate nor door at that spot, but a little flight of wooden steps up one side of the wall and down the other, soon brought them to the sandy lane beyond where two or three cottages were seen by the side of the road. The yellow light was gleaming out from the windows of more than one of these lowly habitations, and advancing to a

door that stood exactly opposite, Edmonds opened it and went in, followed close by Dr. Western and Mr. Morton. The park-keeper cast a quick and eager glance around into every corner of the room; but Lucy Edmonds was not there. There was an old and sickly woman sitting in a large wicker-chair by the side of the little fireplace, and another woman of the same class about forty years of age busily making her some tea; but the form he looked for did not meet the poor man's eye, and his heart sunk.

"So Lucy is not here, good dame!" he said, speaking to the sick woman, as both the tenants of the cottage turned round in some surprise at the entrance of so numerous a party.

"Oh, dear, no, Mr. Edmonds," said Dame Hazlewood, "she's gone home."

"She's been gone well nigh an hour," said the other woman.

Edmonds pressed his two hands tight together, but uttered not a word. Yet the expression of anguish and alarm in his face instantly struck the woman who had last spoke, and she exclaimed, "Has the poor dear not come home?"

"No," answered Edmonds; "no, nor is she on the way."

"Perhaps you did not take the same path, Mr. Edmonds," replied the younger woman; "you might pass very close to each other without knowing it. I'm sure as I came down an hour or so ago, I should have never known that any one was along the other walk, if young Mr. Latimer had not come through the trees, and said, 'Is that you, Jack!'"

"Mr. Latimer is sick in bed at Brown's cottage, my good lady," said Morton, advancing. "You must be mistaken."

"Oh, no, sir," answered Dame Hazlewood's friend. "I saw him with my own eyes. He was oddly dressed, to be sure, as if he didn't wish to be known; but I'd swear to him anywhere."

"I think there must be an error," said Dr. Western; but before he could conclude the sentence, Edmonds, with a flashing eye and a burning cheek, broke in upon his speech, exclaiming, "No, no, no! It was he, enough. The villain has robbed me of my child—I know all about it. He has corrupted her heart, and condemned her soul; and God's curse and her father's be upon both their heads!"

Dr. Western laid his hand upon his arm, saying, with a grave brow and solemn tone, "Forbear, forbear!"

"I cannot, sir—I cannot!" cried Edmonds, furiously. "He has made her lie to me; he has perverted as pure and good a girl as ever lived. She has had warning—she has had counsel—she has had her father's commands; but she has neither honored his nor God's. All by the persuasion of this black villain! Curses upon him—ay, and upon her too, and may they light upon my head if ever I see her again! I will go home—I will go home, and break my poor wife's heart with this news," and, without waiting for remonstrance or reproof, he flung out of the cottage, crossed the road, mounted the stile, and entered the park.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Morton and the clergyman stood silent in the cottage for several moments after Edmonds had left them; the countenance of each was grave and sad; but though that of the rector, perhaps, expressed more sorrow, his companion's showed traces of anger and indignation in the contracted brow and flushed cheek.

"This young man is incorrigible, I fear," said Morton, after a pause. "With such warnings as he has had in various ways, to see him take the first moment of returning health to ruin an innocent girl and break her father's heart, shows a spirit too corrupt and perverted to admit even the hope of reformation."

"We must always hope," replied Dr. Western, "but this indeed is very bad. I know not well what is to be done; for in order to rescue this unhappy girl from his hands, if she be inclined to stay with him, we ought to have her father's sanction."

"Had we not better follow him to his house?" asked Morton. "Perhaps, by reason and admonition, my dear sir, you might induce the poor man to think better of this affair, and take the only means that can be devised for saving his child. They cannot have taken her far."

"It is in vain to talk to him to-night," said Dr. Western. "His mind is in a state that will not bear it; and, whether the law will justify me or not, I must take his consent for granted, and on my own responsibility issue a warrant against those who are supposed to have carried off this unhappy girl. We cannot tell as yet whether she has been wholly consenting, and at all events, being under age, her father can claim her."

"I am sure it was the young gentleman from Mallington House," joined in the woman who was in attendance upon Dame Hazlewood; "that I can swear to any where."

"Then come up to the rectory early to-morrow, Mrs. Wilson," said Dr. Western; "I will issue the warrant to-night at all risks, but in the mean time inquire amongst your neighbors as to which way Lucy and her seducer went, and if you gain any information let me know. They could not have gone out by the great gates or we must have met them."

"And they did not come over the stile, I am sure," said Mrs. Wilson, "for the door hadn't been shut two minutes before you came in, sir."

"Do you remember having seen a boat cross the river?" asked Morton.

Dr. Western bowed his head with a meaning look, but merely replied "We had better get home as soon as possible. Remember to send me any information you may obtain, Mrs. Wilson, without a moment's delay."

The good woman promised to obey, and the two gentlemen quitting the cottage, returned through the park, conversing over what had taken place.

"This is sad, very sad indeed," said Dr. Western; "and these are the things, my dear young friend, which form the most painful parts of a clergyman's existence; to see every admonition and every effort to check the wild course of passion and folly by the restraints of religion, vain and empty; to see the young go on in vice and wickedness, and the old often die in impeni-

tence and sin; to witness men heaping on their heads misery and wretchedness, in this world and the next; and to commit to the earth from which we sprung the body of those for whom we dare hardly hope for salvation hereafter. They are every-day occurrences and very bitter."

"They must be so, indeed," replied Morton. "but yet there must be many subjects of consolation, too. Some you must be the means of saving, some of reclaiming and leading to repentance."

"Too few," answered Dr. Western, with a sigh, "far too few; and when I come to ask myself—if such vices and crimes produce feelings of grief and even of anger in a sinful mortal creature like myself, what they must be in the eyes of a being pure, wise, and holy like God—I feel almost overwhelmed at the contemplation; and the burden of the great responsibility undertaken by any one who attempts to teach and lead his fellow creatures seems far more vast and weighty than, in the light short-sightedness of our hearts, we are inclined to think it. I believe that if I had had a due sense of all the important duties and great requirements of an ecclesiastic's life, in those early days when I was ordained, I should have shrunk from the task, from a consciousness of my own inadequacy. But, alas! my dear sir, men enter the church as an occupation, as a profession, as a means of livelihood or of advancement; and rarely, very rarely, consider duly what it is they put their hand to. Here, this poor girl, Lucy, she has been a regular attendant upon my church. I have spoken with her and her family often in private. I have endeavored to give them on all occasions such counsel and admonition as I thought would lead them right; and yet, when I find her quitting the paths of virtue, disregarding her parents' commands, and forgetting the precepts of her God, I cannot but fear that I have not done enough, and that a share of this sin may rest with me for negligence."

"Nay, nay, my dear friend," replied Morton; "such, I am sure, is not the case. You must remember that prophets and preachers from the beginning of time have striven in vain to banish sin from the world, and restrain the force of human passion. All that we can do is to labor as far as we have strength; and very often that labor will be unsuccessful. But perhaps," he continued, willing to lead the conversation away from the points that were most painful to his companion, "we may be judging harshly of this poor girl—we may be even doing wrong to Alfred Latimer himself. That good woman may be mistaken, or if not, some violence may have been used. Do you not remember I thought I heard a scream as we were walking from the park-keeper's cottage up to the hall?"

"I do, I do," answered Mr. Western, "and though it may seem strange to say so, I would rather have it as you suppose than otherwise—I would rather have this poor Lucy injured in body than in spirit—I would rather that the wicked should add another crime to many gone before, than that one hitherto pure and innocent should fall into vice."

"I can understand you perfectly, my dear friend," replied Morton; "but in regard to

Alfred Latimer, do not let us give way too much to prejudice. This Mrs. Wilson may, as I have said, be in error. She saw the person whom she suspects to have been him but for a moment. It was nearly dark when she met him; he has no good reputation with the country people any more than with ourselves; and the resemblance may have been fanciful entirely. This morning he was certainly ill in bed; and I think it will be best, while you return home and take measures for apprehending those who have committed this outrage, for me to walk up to the common, and ascertain whether he be really there or not. Till that is ascertained our dear Louisa had better not be informed of what has occurred, as it would only fill her with painful suspicions, which after all may be unfounded."

Dr. Western offered some opposition to his young companion's plan, alleging that he might involve himself in a quarrel with Alfred Latimer, which might have very painful consequences; but Morton, sure of his own calmness and self-command, persisted in his design, and they walked on together towards the little town of Mallington, where all was calm and tranquil, the lights shining forth from the windows, and many of the inhabitants standing out before their doors, or strolling through the street to enjoy the sweet air of a night scarcely touched with the approach of autumn. The moon was rising large and round, as the two gentlemen crossed the bridge; and her light struggling with some clouds, as she ascended the arch of heaven, fell in patches of wavy silver upon the waters, and on the broad leaves of the water lilies that here and there spread out from the banks; but neither Morton nor Dr. Western had any inclination to pause and gaze at a prospect which at another time they might have stayed long to contemplate. The heart of each felt too dark and gloomy for the beauty of the scene to find its way in; and hurrying on into Mallington, Morton left the worthy rector at the inn to summon the constables of the place, and take such other measures as were necessary for the restoration of Lucy Edmonds to her home, while he himself walked on up the hill, and with a rapid pace bent his steps to the cottage of the Widow Brown. As he went he met several men returning from work at a distance, and when the moon shone out so that they could see the general appearance of the gentleman whom they passed, they civilly gave him goodnight, with that decent respect for superior station which was then general, and is not altogether extinguished in England; but the clouds still from time to time completely covered the fair planet, and even the sandy path from the high road to the cottage was then with difficulty to be distinguished.

At the door of Widow Brown's house Morton knocked before he entered, and at first no answer was returned; but upon repeating the summons the voice of the old woman herself was heard in a harsh tone exclaiming "Come in! Why the devil do you stand knocking there!"

On Morton's entrance she seemed both surprised and annoyed, but changed her tone to a more civil one as she asked what was his pleasure.

"I wish to see Mr. Latimer, my good dame," replied Morton; "shall I find him in the next room?"

Mother Brown hesitated, and probably, if she had possessed any means of preventing her visitor from satisfying himself, she would have said that the young gentleman was asleep. Certain it is that he first rose to her lips; but remembering that she was alone, and could not stop Mr. Morton from going on into the adjoining room if he thought fit, she replied "He has gone out upon the common, sir, to take a little walk in the moonlight. He thought it would do him good, poor gentleman."

With this confirmation of the suspicions which had been entertained against Mrs. Charlton's son, Morton did not think fit to ask any more questions, but merely answering, "Well, tell him I called to see him," he turned and left the cottage.

There had been a light within, and a cloud was just coming over the moon, the silvery edge resting half over her disc affording a gleam of light, which lasted but a moment, however, till the dark vapor swept across and cast its shadows upon the earth. During that moment Morton thought that he caught sight of a man's head and shoulders just rising above the edge of the neighboring pit; but he was not one easily to apprehend any danger, and he walked quietly on, merely noticing that the figure disappeared more suddenly than could be accounted for by the increased darkness produced by the cloud; for the brightness of the sky around afforded sufficient light to see, though indistinctly. Scarcely had he passed the spot, however, where the man's head and shoulders had appeared, when he heard a sound like gravel falling from the bank into the pit below, under the tread of some one springing up, and he was instinctively turning round towards the side whence the noise proceeded, when he received a violent blow on the head which laid him stunned and bleeding on the ground.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHAT a strange thing it would be if, even for a brief period, we could see at one glance all the manifold operations that are going on around us, and are destined to affect the course of our life—to bring us weal or woe, to lead us to right or wrong, to raise us to fortune, or to sink us in adversity. How many minute and apparently trifling causes should we see working their way towards us; swelling as they come, like the avalanche, from the size of a pebble in the magnitude of a mountain; first rolling slowly, as if they would never have force to continue their course, and then sweeping on like lightning, and overwhelming all obstructions. Such a view of the causes which form our fate, however, is wisely and beneficently denied to mortal man, and it is only when deeds have been done and paths chosen, when events have occurred and consequences are inevitable, that we can turn our eyes towards the sources of the things that are, and trace the stream of circumstances that surround us, back towards the fountain head. Such also must be my course in regard to the

events of the night of which we have just been speaking; and we must look back for an hour or two, dear reader, to the period when about sunset a boat crossed the river from the Malmington side to the sedgey piece of ground, which we have more than once alluded to as that where Lucy Edmonds first met her lover's darling and criminal companion.

The boat reached the shore, and was drawn into a little sort of muddy creek where several large old willows hid it from observation. There, one of the two men which it contained jumped on shore; and the other, stretching himself out in the bottom of the punt, laid his head upon the raised part of the stern, and seemed to dispose himself to sleep. The other—in whom it required an eye well acquainted with his person to recognise Alfred Latimer—walked on, winding amongst the osiers, and choosing the firmer parts of the ground till he reached the path. Thence, after looking around him for a minute or two, he crossed through the shrubs and underwood, to the other footway, down which, as we have seen, Mr. Morton had come in the search for Lucy. There he paused for some minutes, looking up the path with an impatient glance, and muttering to himself with an oath, "Jack Williams is devilish late—I wonder what is keeping him. If Lucy should come first, I doubt that I should get her to the boat. It will soon be getting dark, and she won't stay out late I'm sure. Hark! there's a step," and hurrying through the trees again, he exclaimed, incautiously, "Is that you, Jack?"

The moment he beheld Dame Wilson, however, he withdrew before he thought she could notice him, and then listened for her retreating footfalls till he was certain she must have left the spot. He then turned along the path for a few steps in the direction of the hall, retraced his path again, and was once more wheeling round, when, without having heard any one approach, he found Jack Williams by his side.

"Why this isn't the place, Mr. Latimer," said Williams in a low voice; "if you don't mind what you're about, she'll pass without your seeing her; quick, get through the trees, and look out on that other road."

"Come along, then," said Alfred Latimer, "I did not know which path it was upon."

"No, go yourself first," replied Williams, in the same quick manner; "try to persuade her first, gently, before we use force; I will be close at hand."

The young gentleman, following this counsel, crossed once more through the trees, while Williams hid himself in the brushwood and listened. Several minutes elapsed, however, before Lucy herself appeared, and Alfred Latimer was beginning to think that she must have passed, when he suddenly caught sight of her coming with faint and agitated steps along the side of the marsh. He instantly sprang forward to meet her; but though joy at seeing him again was upon poor Lucy's countenance, her first words were—"Oh! Mr. Latimer, I promised never to meet you again."

"You have done so by accident, Lucy," said Alfred Latimer, taking her hand, and pressing it to his; "they cannot blame you; and, indeed, if you would be wise, and loved me as I once

thought you did, no one would have any right to blame you, for you would now be my wife."

"Oh, Alfred!" replied Lucy, looking up in his face with a reproachful glance, "you know too well"—but she did not finish the sentence, and he went on.

"You would have me believe that you do love me, Lucy," he said; "but how can I think so when, for a mere rash whim of your father's—a hatred of me without a cause—you not only make me miserable, but drive me to all sorts of rash things. See what your unkindness has already brought about. Have I not quarrelled with my mother, quitted her house, gone to London, half ruined myself, and then, in coming down like a madman to seek you because I was informed that your father was going to marry you to another, have I not been dashed almost to pieces?"

Poor Lucy wept, but through her tears she answered, "No, no, Alfred; I will never marry another."

"Then be mine now, dearest Lucy," replied Alfred Latimer, pressing her closer to him. "We have now the opportunity. Do not let us lose it. And then my heart will be at rest, and no one can tease you any more to be another's wife, when you love me. I have a boat here close at hand, which will carry us across the river in two minutes. Then I have got the pretty cottage for you that stands away at the back of the common, where you can be quiet and peaceable all night, and to-morrow we can go away to a distance and be married immediately—come, dear Lucy, come!"

"Oh, no, no!" murmured Lucy Edmonds, striving to free herself from his arms as he would have drawn her towards the river-side. "I must not—I dare not, Alfred."

"What, when I have risen from a sick bed to come and ask you at the risk of life!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer, impetuously. "Is this love, Lucy! Is this affection?"

"You know I love you," she answered, "but my father—my mother—I cannot, I ought not—oh, I do love you truly, but—"

At that moment Williams appeared suddenly from amongst the trees, and though his touch was not rough as he took her by the arm, the surprise and terror of the moment called a scream from her lips.

"Come, come, Miss Edmonds," he said, "there is no use of resisting—one can see well enough how your heart leads you, and it is too late to fight with it now. Besides, you must come; Mr. Latimer has promised to marry you in my hearing, and he will keep his word. Do not keep us here till people come, and we get into a row, where some of us may lose our lives. Do kindly what you must do, and think what would befall if your father were to come up just now."

As he spoke he aided Latimer in drawing her along towards the boat, but his last words seemed to have more effect on Lucy Edmonds than any thing else. Before, she had resisted, though but feebly; but at the thought of her father's appearance at that moment, and all the consequences that might ensue, she murmured, "Oh, Heaven forbid!" and looked wildly round, suffering them to lead her on without further opposition. In another minute she was seated in

the punt, which was immediately pushed off by the man Brown, and was soon in the midst of the river. Supported by Alfred Latimer, she sat with her hands covering her eyes, and the tears streaming through her fingers as the boat glided over the checkered surface of the waters, now rippling in the moonlight, now shadowed by the clouds. It took but a minute or two to cross, and as soon as the punt touched the ground, and the man Brown had jumped out and moored it by the chain, Alfred Latimer carried rather than led the poor girl to the shore, and then endeavored to support her trembling form upon his arm. But Lucy could hardly stand, and was still less able to walk, so that they were obliged to pause for a minute or two, nearly at the spot where Louisa Charlton had plunged in to save the unhappy girl's brother, while Alfred Latimer endeavored to soothe her agitation, and Williams brought some water from the stream to sprinkle in her face lest she should faint. They had not been long there when they heard the sound of voices from the other side. Lucy recognised her father's tones; but it was too late now she thought to hesitate or to resist. The die was cast; her fate for weal or woe was sealed, and the voice which had once been so pleasant to her ear, now brought nothing but terror; yet it was the terror which gives strength, and not which overpowers, and with a great effort she said, "I can go! I can go! Oh, Heaven! do not let them find us."

With her lover supporting her on one side, and Williams on the other—while the man Brown followed lest his aid should be needed—Lucy advanced along the road which led towards the back of the common, with her heart beating fearfully and her breath coming short. As they began to ascend the hill, however, she was obliged to pause again, and clinging to the arm of Alfred Latimer, now her only trust and support, she leaned her head upon his shoulder, saying, "A moment, Alfred, a moment—I will go on again in a moment."

They all stopped in silence, and as they waited the gay sound of village mirth reached them from Mallington.

Oh, how sad it came upon poor Lucy's ear! It seemed to tell her with a prophetic voice that the light laugh, the joyous merriment, was no more to be her portion upon earth—that she was given over to heart-sinking despondency, to self-reproach and sadness—that the peace and the pleasure, the calm night, the contented day, the spirit at rest, and the bosom without care, were all gone for ever! But there is something even in such dark and powerful convictions which gives a vigor, though it be the vigor of despair. She was anxious to fly from all sounds that she had loved, for they seemed to ring the knell of departed days, and saying, in a low tone, "Now, Alfred, I can go," she resumed her way up the hill.

The walk was a long one, for the cottage which Williams had hired for Alfred Latimer was at least two miles distant from Mallington; but Lucy Edmonds stopped no more. She spoke not, indeed; for she was full of the dark thoughts of her fate, and even love could not yet light up hope's lamp again. Latimer strove to cheer her, talked lightly of the future, spoke soothing and endearing words, vowed endless tenderness

and affection; and Lucy still clung to him with an eager anxious clasp, which expressed too well how strongly she felt that he was all that was left to her on earth. She knew not to what a reed she trusted.

At length the cottage door was reached, but the windows were all dark and cheerless. There was no light within any more than in her own heart, and though the leaves of the woodbine and the rose climbed over the little trellised porch, and reached their fibres up to the thatch, they seemed like nightshade to poor Lucy Edmonds, as she waited while Williams drew the key from his pocket and opened the door. He had had everything prepared, however, with some care and neatness. Candles stood upon the table, which were soon lighted, showing a neatly-furnished room and various provisions upon the shelves and tables around. Such attention to her comfort might either have soothed the poor girl's heart, or have shown her that they had calculated with certainty on bringing her here that night; but it was of leaving her father's house she thought, of disobeying his command, of never seeing his face again, of being no longer pressed to her mother's bosom, of the breaking of all the fond ties of youth, of the loss of all the dear affections of early days—and when she looked around all seemed desolation.

Alfred Latimer led her to a chair, and seated her with her hand in his; but Williams, approaching one of the shelves, took down a bottle of wine, and pouring some out into a glass gave it to her, saying in the kindly tone which sailors generally use to the weak and young, "Come, take that, Miss Edmonds, you are tired and faint. It will be all well in a day or two, and then when you are his wife your father will forget and forgive, and see things very differently. Come, don't vex yourself; for you may be very happy if you like."

Lucy took the wine and drank it. She would have done anything that they bade her; but the moment after, though the hopes that Williams presented to her mind cheered her for an instant, the voice of the man Brown, who had just entered, made her start and turn round with terror.

"I shouldn't mind a glass, too," he said, "for it's a long walk. Come, pour us out some, Jack," and his words and his appearance brought a new source of apprehension into Lucy's mind. What were these companions of the man she loved? Who were these familiar friends with whom he consorted? Were these the companions of the son of a high race? Were these the persons he trusted and esteemed?

Williams, however, answered nothing to the ruffian's speech, but spoke eagerly for a few minutes in a low voice to Alfred Latimer, urging him apparently to some course which he did not think fit to pursue. "Well," he said at length, "you are not right—but we had better go. Only remember your promise, Mr. Latimer. Come, Brown," he continued, and seeing the man helping himself to the wine, he gave him a terrible oath, and pushed him out of the cottage.

Lucy Edmonds was left alone with Alfred Latimer. She gazed for a moment or two on his face with a look of deep, earnest, anxious inquiry, then cast herself upon his bosom with

a bitter and overpowering burst of tears; but Alfred Latimer was a villain, and without compassion.

In the meantime Williams and his companion, Brown, mounted the little bank under which the cottage lay, and came upon the common above. There was a small public-house at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, at the door of which Brown stopped, declaring that, as he had been bilked of his wine, the other should treat him to a glass of spirits; and, going in, he tossed off more than half a pint of the liquid fire, which is but too readily to be found in such places, partly at his own expense, partly at that of Williams. He was inclined to stop and gossip with some loose characters whom they found in the parlor; but the superior ruffian with whom he was associated for the time, suspecting that their adventure of that night might not be long a secret if he remained, would not suffer him to do so, but forced him out, after a balt of about five minutes, and took the way with him towards his mother's hut. The man had been drinking before, and the spirits he had taken had some effect, not in inebriating, but in raising his dull and obtuse nature into something approaching a brutal kind of energy.

"Hang me," he said, as they walked along, "if I should not like to have a spree of some kind to-night. I wish it was the pheasant season, I would clear out Master Edmond's covers for him while he's piping after his daughter."

"Go home, and go to bed, you fool," said William, in a surly tone. "When you do anything of that kind, have your head clear, and don't go drinking and then talking as loud as a babbling old woman in a passion."

The other man felt his own inferiority sufficiently to be silent, though he was not very well pleased with his companion's words; and thus they proceeded till they came to the clump of old fir trees, about a couple of hundred yards distant from Mother Brown's dwelling, where her son caught hold of Williams's arm, saying in a lower tone than he had used before, "D—n me, if there isn't somebody walking up to the house! If it's some one come after young Latimer, this job will all be blown."

"Some of the servants, I dare say," replied Williams, looking towards the house, and catching the indistinct outline of a figure coming from the side of Mallington. "I hope your mother won't be fool enough to say he's out."

"Why, what would you have her say?" asked her son.

"Can't she say he's asleep?" said Williams; but just then, a gleam of moonlight passing over the figure they had seen, he added, "It doesn't look like a servant either."

"I know who it is," said Tom Brown; "d—n him he is always meddling, and I'll break his head some day."

"If you mean Gibbs, you are mistaken, Tom," replied Williams, "he is safe enough, that I'll answer for."

"I know what I mean," rejoined the other, in a mysterious tone, "and I can tell you what, if that fellow finds that the young cove is out when everybody thinks he's lying ill at my dam's, you'll have the whole story ferreted out, and the lass taken back to her father before to-

morrow morning. But come into the gravel pit, Jack; and wait till he is gone."

Walking silently along the path, they approached the house, and descended into a pit which lay at the side of the road from Mother Brown's cottage to Mallington. There Williams seated himself at the bottom of the bank; but Brown climbed up till he could see over, and his companion remarked that he sought out a large stone, which he held tight in his right hand, holding by the turf above with his left.

"Come, no nonsense, Tom," said Williams, "let us hear what you are going to be after."

"Nothing; but look out," replied Tom Brown; and immediately added, "he's gone in."

A pause of about half a minute ensued, and then the ruffian above said in a low voice to him below, "He has come out again. He has found it all out, or I'm—;" and at the same moment, he drew himself back as if about to descend.

There is a consciousness of the growing weight of crime which at times will oppress the most wicked, and Williams felt it at that moment. "Come down, Tom," he said, "no more work to night. We have enough upon our hands for once." But almost at the same moment Brown scrambled up without reply, and his companion heard a blow and a fall. All was silent, however; and, springing up the bank like a squirrel, Williams stood upon the common just as the moon was coming out again from behind the quick passing cloud. Tom Brown was standing at three or four paces distance; and Morton, with his hat knocked off and lying at some distance, was stretched upon the ground, with his face upon the grass.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE appearance of Dr. Western in the village-inn, and his immediately sending for the constable of Mallington, fluttered good poor Mrs. Pluckrose a great deal, nor was her agitation diminished when the worthy clergyman, having taken his seat in a vacant parlor, proceeded to inquire particularly into her knowledge of a certain Jack Williams, and of his usual haunts and places of resort.

"Why, bless you, sir!" replied the widow; "I know nothing of the man. He never comes here, not he. He knows better, except it be to see somebody lodging in the house, and that I can't help. However, it's only once that he's done that, which was this blessed night; and he and the fellow Gibbs got drunk together—that's to say Gibbs got quite drunk, and he a little worse for liquor. But I could not stop them, you know, sir; they would have the punch, and indeed I did not take notice of how much they had. Betsey made it and carried it up."

"My good lady," replied Dr. Western, "do not begin to defend yourself before you are accused. The fact is, a very wrong and improper act has been committed this night; and, from information which I have received, I am induced to believe that this man Williams has had some share in it. My questions, therefore, were merely directed to ascertain where he is likely to be found, in order that he himself may be questioned. I must also speak with this Mr.

Gibbs, and I wish you would call him down, if he is in the house."

"Lord bless your reverence! he is as drunk as a beast," answered Mrs. Pluckrose. "I never saw no one drunker. However, he's quiet in his cups, that's one thing, and as sound asleep as a pig in a sty."

Dr. Western mused, for from Morton's information he had learned that Gibbs had discovered the meeting of Williams and poor Lucy Edmonds, and had hoped to obtain some farther intelligence of the traveler. After a moment's thought, however, he continued his interrogation of the worthy landlady, saying "You tell me this man Williams was here to-night. How long is it since he left your house, Mrs. Pluckrose?"

"It can hardly be an hour, sir, I should think," answered the hostess.

"Which way did he go?" demanded the rector.

Mrs. Pluckrose put her finger to her temple, as people do when their brain has got a little confused under any circumstances of temporary agitation, and they wish to steady their thoughts, seeming to fancy that it can be done by mechanical pressure. "Oh dear! now I remember," she exclaimed at length; "he went up the village, sir, towards the hill. He came down and told me that Mr. Gibbs was drunk, and that he wouldn't drink any more, for fear he should be so too. I looked which way he went, and he turned to the right."

"You are sure he did not go over the bridge?" asked Dr. Western.

"He didn't seem as if he was going," replied Mrs. Pluckrose; "but Bill, the ostler, can tell more, for he was standing outside—Here, Bill! Bill! Where's Bill, Betsey!—send him in."

Bill, however, only confirmed Mrs. Pluckrose's account. In his estimation, as well as that of many other persons of Mallington, Jack Williams had grown somewhat of a great man since he had returned from sea, although he had previously been a very little one. The process of this transformation is very easily explained. It was brought about by the same means that affect the opinion of almost every human being, in regard to a fellow man,—I say almost every human being, I do not say all; for there are some few—perhaps one in forty or fifty thousand—who resist such influences. The fact is, that Williams had come back with a good deal of money, whereas he had gone away with none. Conceive what a vast accession of good qualities this simple fact implied. There is no use denying it—wit, wisdom, honor, honesty, grace, virtue, to nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of the human race, lie in the small compass of a purse. A poor rogue, in the opinion of almost every one, is the worst of all kinds of rogues; and a rich rogue—Heaven bless the mark!—was there ever such a thing heard of!

However, Jack Williams came home with plenty of money, and spent it with discreet liberality. The ostler, therefore, spoke of him reverentially, and called him Mr. Williams, with due decorum. He assured Dr. Western that Mr. Williams had gone up the street in an easy kind of way, as if he were going home.

"And where is his home?" asked Dr. Western, not yet satisfied.

"Why, you see, your reverence," replied the

ostler, "he did use to lodge at Mother Brown's upon the common, till the young gentleman had the accident, and was taken in there; but since then I hear he's got a room at Pickett's, in the lane just opposite Mallington House."

"Have you seen Mr. Latimer since his return?" was Dr. Western's next question.

"Oh dear, no, sir," answered the ostler: "he's seen nobody, as I know of. He is very bad, they say."

"Oh dear, no," replied Dr. Western; "he is doing quite well."

While this conversation had been going on Mrs. Pluckrose had been standing by the table, twisting the corner of her clean apron into as many curious forms as a sheet of writing paper is folded into by a certain ingenious gentleman who perambulates the streets of London, but she now ventured to join in for the purpose of informing the rector that Mr. Latimer had certainly seen Jack Williams, inasmuch as she had seen the latter in Mr. Goree's shop, purchasing some cravats for him. While she was conveying this important piece of intelligence the constable made his appearance: a keen stout man, with a hawk's nose and a pair of sharp bright eyes, not altogether parallel in their direction. The degree of obliquity which they possessed could hardly be called a squint, for two straight lines, one drawn from the pupil of each, would not have met for some ten or twelve yards; but nevertheless those two straight lines would have met ultimately, and the effect was a certain cunning and not very satisfactory expression, which conveyed to the mind of the beholder, perhaps wrongly, the idea of a shrewd but not very sincere character. His own interests, of which he had a very tolerable notion, generally kept his conduct indeed more straightforward than his look; and, trusting to this tie, Dr. Western and the other magistrates in the neighborhood generally relied upon him with confidence; nor had they ever hitherto had occasion to repent of so doing. It is true Edmonds, the park-keeper, and the gamekeepers of the late Earl of Mallington had more than once complained of his negligence in dealing with certain suspicious characters; but Harry Soames had always a good excuse in the fact that nothing had been proved against the persons they grumbled at, and that before he could meddle he must have something better than their mere suspicions to go upon.

In the present instance, Dr. Western communicated to him what had taken place, directed him to take two or three stout fellows from the village, and, without the loss of a moment, to use his best endeavors for discovering where poor Lucy Edmonds had been taken to. He further ordered him, if successful in his search, to bring her to the rectory, whatever the hour might be, and, moreover, to apprehend any one whom he had reason to believe was a participant in her abduction from her father's protection, and to lodge them in the cage for the night.

Harry Soames scratched his head at the idea of these vigorous measures; "Well, your reverence knows best," he said, "what's law and what's not, but if every young man was apprehended for playing the fool with a pretty girl, the cage would be desperate full, I've a notion.

I can't help thinking that Miss Lucy's gone willingly enough, though your reverence seems to think not. I've seen young Master Latimer more nor once a-hanging about after her. She was precious fond of him, too, as well she might be of such a young gentleman. Am I to take him up if I find him with her?"

"You are to make no distinction of persons whatsoever," replied Dr. Western, not very well satisfied with his constable's notions of morality. "I suspect, as you do, that Mr. Latimer may have had something to do with this affair, and although I have not sufficient proof of the fact to give you a warrant against him, yet I will furnish you with full authority to act in the manner I have directed, and the responsibility will rest upon me, not upon you. Bring me a pen and ink."

While the man was gone, the rector took from his pocket-book some blank warrants, and though, to say the truth, somewhat puzzled how to fill them up in a case of a character with which he was not accustomed to deal, yet, resolved rather to run the risk of overstepping the law than suffer a great wrong to be committed where he could prevent it, he drew the warrant in the best manner he could devise, and placed it in the constable's hands, repeating his order to lose no time, and adding such information as he thought might direct him in his search.

This being done he issued forth from the inn, and, after gazing up the street to see if Mr. Morton was yet returning, he took his way home to the rectory, where he found that his young friend had not yet arrived. As may be supposed, the events which had occurred and the business in which he had been engaged, had left a grave and melancholy shade upon his countenance which was remarked both by his sister and Miss Charlton. Each was somewhat surprised, too, to see him return alone; and though Louisa did not venture to inquire the cause of Morton's absence, Mrs. Evelyn did. Her brother's reply, that he had gone to make some inquiries, and would soon rejoin them, satisfied the two ladies that nothing had gone amiss in that quarter; but still the anxious and thoughtful look of the worthy old clergyman, the sudden and expectant turn of his head when he heard the gate bell ring, and the unusual degree of restlessness which he displayed, somewhat alarmed both of his fair companions, and showed them clearly that something was wrong, which he did not think fit to explain.

It had been arranged when Mrs. Charlton's carriage had been sent back, that Dr. Western was to walk up with Louisa and Mr. Morton to Mallington House, about ten o'clock, but that hour had not yet arrived when the sound of a vehicle driving up was heard, and in a minute or two after, the rector's servant announced that the chariot had come for Miss Charlton.

"Why, we told them that we would walk," replied Dr. Western, "and Mr. Morton has not yet returned."

"Mr. Morton is up at the house, sir," answered the man, "and not very well, so Jones says."

Louisa's cheek turned very pale; and the good clergyman, feeling for her anxiety, and knowing that few evils are equal to suspense,

inquired at once, "What is the matter; did the coachman say?"

"Why, sir, he told me," replied the servant, who had not shut his eyes to the attachment between Miss Charlton and the young gentleman of whom he spoke, "that Mr. Morton had been knocked down upon the common, and had been helped home by a man of the name of Williams. Mr. Nethersole had bled him, and he was better, and begged Jones to say he was not much hurt."

Louisa Charlton had felt anxieties and apprehensions before now. During the last year of her father's life she had had a daily dread upon her, and her love for him she had thought was as great as it was possible to be for any human being; but those sensations were very different from that which she felt now. Her heart sunk and her spirit seemed to ask itself if this were the beginning of a fresh course of sorrows; if the new path which she had opened for herself, and which to the eye of imagination and hope had seemed all bordered with flowers, was already presenting the thorns that are destined to obstruct all human enjoyment. She did not give way, indeed; the paleness of her cheek and a certain apprehensive look in her beautiful eyes, were the only indications which showed to the two kind friends who watched her how deeply she felt. But Dr. Western understood it all, and, laying his hand gently upon her arm, he said "I will go with you, my dear child. I must see into this affair myself. Outrages are becoming somewhat too frequent here, and although I doubt not our young friend is not much hurt, yet measures must be taken for bringing the offenders to justice."

On the way up to Mallington House, which occupied a considerable time from the steepness of the hill, Dr. Western spoke cheerfully to his fair companion, trying to divert her mind from apprehensions for her lover to any other topic. Louisa followed the direction he gave to the conversation, but it was evident from her replies, though they were calm and reasonable, that her mind was still busy with the one engrossing subject, and at length Dr. Western, returning to it boldly, took her hand in his, saying, "Do not alarm yourself unnecessarily, my love. Grievs and anxieties are more or less the portion of every one, but as it is our duty to God to bear them with resignation when they do befall us, so is it our duty to ourselves not to hasten them by anticipation nor increase them by apprehensions."

Louisa replied by assuring him that she strove as far as possible to keep her mind easy, and the moment after the carriage drove through the gates and stopped at the door of the house. We will not pause to analyse poor Louisa's feelings, nor to tell how they varied at every step which that pretty little foot set upon the stairs. In spite of all good Dr. Western's exhortations—in spite of all her own excellent resolutions—Fancy, that incorrigible jade, had been playing all manner of unpleasant tricks with her poor heart, till she had set it fluttering like a new-caught bird; and the tormentor went on till at the drawing-room door Louisa had nearly dropped fainting on the carpet. By a strong effort of the mind, however, she contrived to regain some command over herself, and open-

ing the door, went in. There sat Mrs. Charlton at a table quietly writing a note, with an air of the most complete composure possible—very pretty, very well dressed, and very placid; she was the complete antithesis to all poor Louisa's feelings; and it must be confessed that, though our sweet friend was the least splenetic person in the world, she felt almost provoked, as well as a little ashamed, at the contrast between her own agitation and her step-mother's profound tranquillity.

Intense selfishness is a very excellent thing—in some respects—for those who possess it; for although they may be very sensitive upon the one central spot, yet, at every other point, where all the rest of the world are vulnerable, they are guarded with triple steel. I wonder when Lord Bacon wrote his essay upon the wisdom of the ancients, he did not show that the character of Achilles was a mere allegory of the blind Greek to represent a perfectly selfish man; for there cannot be the slightest doubt that such was the case. Take his whole history and it is evident; first, he was dipped in Styx, that bellish stream which rendered him invulnerable to all the stings and arrows of the general enemy. There was but one point in which he could be wounded, and that was the lowest point of his whole frame, his right heel. What could this mean but that he could not be reached through the head or the heart! This gave him very great advantages over all his companions, and he was able to overcome, and even kill, a great many much better men than himself; but still it did not secure him happiness, nor obtain for him ultimate success. What a fine moral to the allegory!—and at length a Phrygian boy, in a night cap, found out the weak point, and despatched him with a missile!

However, Mrs. Charlton was a perfect Achilles in her way; she was quite invulnerable upon all points that did not effect herself; and although it would not have suited her purposes at all, at this time, to have had Mr. Morton killed outright, yet a little bodily suffering and even danger which might render him more interesting in Louisa's eyes, was far from giving her the slightest concern. She would have gone on writing her note, with the fortitude of a martyr, if Mr. Nethersole had been actually trepanning the skull of her guest in the next room, provided she had been quite sure he would not die under the operation, and spoil all the schemes she fancied she had brought nearly to perfection. It was her part, however, on the present occasion to affect a considerable degree of benevolent interest in Mr. Morton's situation; and as soon as she beheld Louisa, with Dr. Western following somewhat more slowly into the room, she laid down the pen with a look of concern, saying, "I did not like to shock you, my love, with the news; but our poor friend, Mr. Morton, has met with a sad accident; but do not agitate yourself, my dear child, he is doing quite well. Oh! kind Doctor Western, I am glad you have come; Morton will be delighted to see you. Pray go up to him—he is in his dressing-room, and while you are gone I will tell Louisa all about it, for I know she concerns him as much as any of us."

Doctor Western thought more than he chose

to say; but following Mrs. Charlton's suggestion, he went up to his young friend; while the worthy mistress of the house proceeded to relate to her step-daughter all the particulars of her lover having been supported back to the house by a man named Williams, wounded and bleeding; dwelling with somewhat cruel minuteness upon details which she could not but feel would inflict bitter anguish upon her auditor.

Hearing voices speaking within, Dr. Western knocked at the dressing-room door before he entered, and on going in found Morton seated in an arm-chair in his dressing-gown, with Mr. Nethersole, the surgeon, beside him. The young gentleman's face was pale and his head had a bandage round it, but he received the worthy clergyman with a smile, saying, "Hard blows seem somewhat rife in your neighborhood, my dear doctor, but this will prove of no consequence, I am sure, and I hope that Miss Charlton has not been alarmed."

"A good deal," replied Dr. Western, who thought fit to speak guardedly in the presence of the surgeon, although he was very sure that Mr. Nethersole, in common with the whole village of Malling on, had already arranged the marriage of Mr. Morton and Louisa. "I dare say, however," he continued, "that the report of our good friend here will remove her apprehension, if he can, as I trust, conscientiously tell her there is no danger."

"I see none," replied Mr. Nethersole, rising at the doctor's hint, and moving towards the door, "and I trust in Mr. Morton to find a more tractable patient than Mr. Latimer has proved."

"Stay a moment, Mr. Nethersole," said Morton, "I think that your knowledge of the country, and of what is taking place amongst the people round, may give Dr. Western and myself some insight into the matter which took me up to the common where I received this blow."

"I cannot have you enter into any business to-night, sir," replied Mr. Nethersole, struggling between a certain degree of curiosity and a sense of professional duty. "Perhaps Dr. Western can explain the affair to me, and I dare say you will be able to express it fully to-morrow."

Morton whispered a few words to Dr. Western, who exclaimed, "Yes, yes, he will be able to tell us more than any one. So he was out! Then it is clearly as we thought," and turning to the surgeon, he informed him of all that had taken place in regard to poor Lucy Edmonds, and inquired whether anything had come to his knowledge which might direct them in their search for her. So well, however, had Williams laid his plans, that even to the ears of Mr. Nethersole, which were habitually regaled by all the gossip of the place, not a hint had arrived which could give them any insight into the events of that night; but, relying upon all the various petty sources of information which were at his command, the worthy surgeon promised boldly to bring them tidings of the whole affair by the next morning; adding at the same time, that if he received any intelligence previously, which might serve as a clue to the place where Lucy had been taken, he would immediately communicate it to the constable. He then added a

warning that quiet and forbearance from all exciting subjects of conversation were absolutely necessary for Mr. Morton, and descended to the drawing-room to make his report to Mrs. Charlton and Louisa.

The conversation between Morton and Dr. Western, after the surgeon had left them, took a sort of zig-zag course between the two principal events of the night, sometimes turning to Mallington Park, sometimes resting upon Mallington common. Into the assault which had been committed upon the person of his young friend Dr. Western inquired as a magistrate, hinting plainly that he strongly suspected that the act had been perpetrated by Williams himself, who was notoriously a bad character, and who had by no means cleared himself to the doctor's full satisfaction from the charge of having knocked down and plundered worthy Mr. Gibbs.

Morton, however, rejected the idea at once, exclaiming, "Oh, no, my dear sir, that is quite out of the question. For several minutes I remained quite stunned and senseless; and when I recovered my recollection, I found this very man bathing my head with water, which he had brought up in his leather hat. He told me that he had found me there as he was walking home, and had seen a man go away from the spot as he came up. Now, I saw the man, too, who did it—at least I can have no doubt of the fact—and he was much taller than this Williams, though not so stout and broadly built."

Dr. Western shook his head, still unconvinced, and proceeded to inquire into all the particulars, asking, amongst other questions, whether in this case as in that of Mr. Gibbs the act of violence had been accompanied by robbery.

"I suppose so," replied Morton; "but I really have not had time to ascertain the fact, what with bleeding, bandaging, and one treatment or another. The sum I had upon me, however, was very small, and, by looking in my pockets, the fact will soon be ascertained."

He rose as he spoke to examine as he proposed, but sat down again immediately, feeling himself giddy; and Dr. Western brought him his coat and waistcoat, which had been cast down upon a chair. His watch had not been taken, but his purse was gone; and though he merely laughed at the trifling loss of money that he had sustained, yet, when he came to put his hand into the pocket of his coat, his brow contracted, and a look of anxiety came into his eyes. "My pocket-book is gone," he said, looking at Dr. Western, "and with it the papers I look, thinking they might be necessary in the inquiry we were making this evening."

"That is unfortunate, indeed!" exclaimed the clergyman, "but they were copies, were they not?"

"In some cases the originals," replied Morton. "They must be recovered by some means, or we shall have interminable law suits."

"They can be of no use to any one else," said Dr. Western; "so that, doubtless, if we offer a reward they will be restored."

"We must couple that offer," answered Morton, "with an engagement to ask no questions. Perhaps, it might be as well to have an officer down from London. They are as much accus-

tomed to negotiate with thieves as to apprehend them."

Knowing the great importance of the papers which had been taken, and feeling what must be the effect of the loss upon his young friend's mind, Dr. Western did his best to persuade him that they would be easily regained; and having succeeded in some degree, and also laid out the plan of operations to be pursued for their recovery, the worthy clergyman left Morton to repose, and proceeded to say a word or two of comfort to Louisa before he returned to the rectory.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THERE are dark and fearful things in life, over which it is well to throw a veil deep and shadowy as themselves. Acts of blood and violence, indeed—the coarser and more deformed passions having little attractive in their aspect, and few links of association with the mind of man, except in its more brutal and depraved state—seldom lead to imitate, or induce to follow, any but those who are already plunged too deep in crime ever to extricate themselves from the abyss. But there be vices and acts, to which the descent, however wide, is so easy, from passions legitimate (and ennobling even) when restrained to proper limits, that many may be tempted to run down the declivity to gather the poisonous flowers at its foot, if their gaudy colors be flouted to the eye, or their baleful odors brought too near the sense.

We left Alfred Latimer alone in the cottage with Lucy Edmonds, not quite an hour after sunset. It was near midnight when the door closed behind him, and he took his way, with a hurried and irregular step, over the moor. He watched not the clouds rushing across the sky; he marked not the light of the declining moon while it played as if in living sport—over bush and tree, and green grass and yellow road, and deep pit and glistening pool—with the shadows that swept by; but with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his hand thrust into his bosom, on he went, without pause, till he came within sight of the cottage where he had been carried after the accident which had befallen the chaise. There for an instant he stopped, put his hand to his head, and thought. As he did so, he looked towards the low building and saw the door partly opened, so that the light streamed out for a moment, and then closed again quickly, as if some one were watching—perhaps for his coming. He went on again quickly, and entered.

There was but one person in the little room; and that was the man Williams, who was seated gloomily at the table, with a candle beside him, smoking a short pipe.

"Ah! you've come back at last," he said abruptly; "this is all very wrong, Mr. Latimer—I know what you will say; but it's all nonsense. If she's to stay there the night alone, it is no matter whether it be an hour or two longer or not. However, here are other things to think of. The matter's blown all over the place; and there have been people up here seeking you, so it's fixed upon you. They have been up at my house, too, but I was not fool-

enough to be out of the way; and Soames, the constable, and half a dozen others, have been beating about for you as if you were a cock pheasant under a hollybush."

"Who came up here?" demanded Alfred Latimer, not a little alarmed and annoyed at what he heard. "What the devil has the constable to do with it! Who can stop me from taking the girl if she is willing to go with me!"

"The magistrates say they can," answered Williams, "and they have issued a warrant against you, but Soames is in no great hurry in executing it; for he is not particularly fond of Master Edmonds, and chuckled over his daughter having gone off, as if it were fine fun. So you've got till to-morrow morning to get poor Lucy away into another county till you can be married, and that matter set all right."

Alfred Latimer made no reply, but looked down upon the table and twisted some white ashes which had fallen from his companion's pipe into a heap between his finger and thumb.

"As to who was seeking you up here," continued Williams, after a moment's pause, "it was the gentleman who is staying at your mother's; and that old idiot, Mother Brown, was fool enough to tell him you were out. Then her son, a greater fool still, chose to make the matter worse by knocking him down on the common with a great stone as big as your head. I found him stunned and bleeding, and took him home very queer, so there will be a fine work about it you may be sure, and I'd advise you to get out of the county for a time as soon as you can."

"I will—I will," answered Alfred Latimer, who saw all the difficulties that these complications were likely to plunge him into. "I can't go to-night, for Lucy must have some rest, and I must get a chaise or something to take us."

"That is soon got," replied Williams, "but you can stop till day-break and then be off. Turn in for a few hours and take some sleep; and about four I'll walk over to Long Sutton and bring a chaise for you while you go and tell poor Lucy Edmonds to get ready."

"But are you sure to wake by that time?" asked Alfred Latimer. "I know if my head is once laid down I shall not open an eye for many an hour."

"You have never been at sea," answered Williams; "if you show a bold heart, and carry out what we were talking of, you'll soon be like me. I never sleep above four hours at a time and seldom that. I could not for my life, Mr. Latimer, go on a minute beyond the hour of my watch; so do not be afraid, I'll wake you."

After a few words more, Alfred Latimer retired to the inner chamber and lay down in his clothes, but his expectations of sleeping soundly were not verified. Whether it was fatigue, or agitation, or the consciousness of guilt that kept him waking, matters little; but he tossed from side to side for well nigh an hour without closing an eye, and during that time his thoughts turned more than once to the words which Williams had spoken—"if you show a bold heart and carry out what we were talking of"—and the wild and dangerous schemes which the other had instilled into his mind presented

themselves to his imagination decked out in all the splendid colors of excitement and adventure. Yes, he thought, he would carry out what had been proposed; he would quit his native land, and on some fair foreign shore live a free and unrestrained life of pleasure and of enterprise. Why should he stay where he was? His noble race disowned him for no fault of his; his mother grudged him the pitiful supply necessary to the enjoyment of life; his little patrimony was already deeply dipped in debt. There were no prospects, no hopes before him—he never thought of honest industry and energetic exertion—and he would go afar, taking Lucy with him, to share his bold free life. Then came the question of, should he marry her? He had not yet got the length of answering boldly, No; but he resolved to think about it further; and that was quite enough to prove that the scoundrel was in full possession of his heart. When a man once asks himself if he shall keep a promise, he may tremble for his honor; but if he takes time to consider, he may write himself down a villain from that hour.

Sleep at length came, and when it did it was profound. He fancied that he had not closed his eyes more than a minute when Williams shook him by the shoulder, and told him to rise, for it was four o'clock. It was as dark as the grave—the moon had gone down, the sky was cloudy, and not the least glimmering of dawn was yet to be discerned. It is wonderful how external things give a color to the feelings of the heart. Alfred Latimer felt the bold wild schemes which he had been indulging, chilled and dimmed by the gloomy aspect of all around him; but after a few moments' conversation with Williams, he set off for the cottage where he had left Lucy, while his companion walked away in the direction of a neighboring village in which was an inn that let post-horses.

Slowly and thoughtfully—if that can be called thought which was but a confused and rambling concatenation of fancies, memories, and purposes—Alfred Latimer walked on in the darkness, internally cursing his own folly in not having returned at once to Mother Brown's cottage, as soon as Lucy had been carried away, and pouring out still more bitter imprecations upon the man Brown for his attack upon Morton; though he did not fail, at the same time, with the rage that all vicious men feel towards any one who endeavors to thwart or expose them, to comment upon what he termed Mr. Morton's impertinence, in endeavoring to ascertain where he had passed the night. "What business is it of his?" he asked himself, "a poor, pitiful devil—what right has he to meddle with my affairs? If he interferes any more, I will make him repent it."

Nor must it be supposed for one moment that Mr. Latimer's indignation at Tom Brown originated in any feeling for Morton, or that he felt grieved that a gentleman from whom he had received more than one proof of kindness had been injured. Not in the least. That was not a part of the young gentleman's character; his selfishness was not less than his fair mother's, though it assumed a different form. Morton might have had his brains knocked out, without calling for any other observation from

Alfred Latimer than "Poor devil!" or something tantamount. But Brown's violence he saw might lead to a good deal of noise and investigation. His conduct, his companions, his schemes, might all be exposed, and some of his purposes thwarted; and, therefore—but from that cause alone—he would willingly have inflicted upon Brown even a more severe chastisement than his offence merited.

As he walked on, the darkness somewhat diminished: not that even the faint streaks of coming day could be at first seen in the east, but there was a sort of gray light began to steal through the blackness of night; and when he reached the bank which sheltered the cottage, he could see a golden gleam coming on some of the clouds at the horizon's edge. He paused and looked at it as it extended, like the first glimmering of heavenly light upon a long darkened mind. He looked up at the cottage, too, as the dawn began to display its closed shutters and rustic porch, covered with climbing plants. It all looked peaceful and calm. There is no heart without some softer point, where some effect may not be produced for good; and as he stood and gazed while the light spread rosy over head, he thought of her within, and her young gentleness, with feelings of tenderness—almost of compassion. Some sensations of compunction came over him, and he murmured, "Well, I will marry her as I promised."

Then he gazed at the cottage again, and paused a while before he knocked, saying, "I dare say she is asleep!"

He little knew Lucy Edmonds, to think that she could sleep.

At length he walked up to the porch, and knocked with his hand, having told her to lock the door, when he left her the night before. But there was no answer, and turning the handle to shake it, so as to rouse her, he found the door open, and went in. Lucy was kneeling beside her bed, exactly in the same guise as the night before, with her head and arms resting on the bed clothes, and her face buried in them. The heaving of her frame showed that she was still weeping; and Alfred Latimer raised her up and strove to comfort her. The first words he spoke were the best that he could have chosen for that purpose, though they were simply suggested by the circumstances of the moment. "Come, Lucy, come!" he said, "do not go on crying; but prepare to come away with me immediately, for the people have found out all, and we must be off into another county directly, or they will take you away, and stop our marriage. Once we are married, you know, they have no power over you."

"Oh that we were!" cried Lucy Edmonds, drying her tears; "but how can we go?"

"I have sent for a chaise, dear girl," replied her lover. "Hark! I think I hear it coming. Get ready—there's a love."

"I will be ready in a moment," answered Lucy; "I will but wash my eyes."

"I will go out, and see if that be it," said Alfred Latimer; and walking into the road he took a step or two up the little declivity, where, as soon as his head was above the slope, he saw the chaise coming down at great speed, with some one inside.

"Williams has come with it," said the young

gentleman. "I am glad of that, for I must tell him to look out, and let me know what is going on;" and thus thinking, he turned back, and entered the little passage of the house.

The chaise drove up at the same time, but the voice of Williams saying to some one, "Well, sir, we don't go any farther. Now, you must walk straight on; and then, the first turning on the left brings you to Mallington," caused Alfred Latimer to look round, when to his surprise he beheld the face of Captain Tankerville.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The sight of Captain Tankerville's face was, at that particular moment and place, by no means agreeable to Alfred Latimer. He remembered instantaneously a promise which he had made and not fulfilled, regarding a certain sum of fifty pounds which it was not very pleasant for him to part with; and he would willingly have retreated into the house, but he was not quick enough to escape the shrewd eyes of his former fellow prisoner, who at once replied to the directions given to him by Jack Williams, saying "I have no need to go to Mallington, for the person I came to seek I see is here."

There was a sort of sneering bitterness in his tone which irritated the already excited feelings of Alfred Latimer; and, giving up the plan which the first impulse led him to pursue, he advanced at once, saying, in a cold tone, "I presume you mean me, Captain Tankerville; but I am too busy at present to hold much conversation with you."

"Our conversation need be very short, Mr. Latimer," replied Tankerville, walking up to him; "I come to ask if you remember having promised me a loan of fifty pounds, which you went away without having performed; and if you are ready and willing to perform it now?"

"And what if I say no?" asked Alfred Latimer, put upon his mettle by the presence of Williams, as well as by the tone which the other assumed. "I am not a man to be bullied, Captain Tankerville; so I again ask, what if I say no?"

"Why, then all I can say for you is that you are a pitiful scoundrel, and that you are scarcely worth the horsewhipping which I shall give you."

"Hush, hush!" cried Williams; "if the matter's to take such a course as that, we had better move further off upon the common. It doesn't do to talk of such things with a lady near."

Alfred Latimer nodded his head, and pointed to Tankerville to go on up the path, which after a moment's consideration he did. The young gentleman followed, with a look towards the house, and Jack Williams strode on by his side, saying, in a whisper, "You should keep your promise, at all events, Mr. Latimer."

"I would if he had spoken civilly," replied the other, "but I won't be bullied by him or any man."

"That's all right, that's all right," replied Williams, "but yet you should find some way of keeping your promise, too."

Alfred Latimer did not answer for a moment or two; but then he put his hand in his pocket

and drew out his pocketbook, saying "I'll tell you what I'll do, Williams; I'll give you the fifty pounds, and then you can let him have it, whatever comes of it, for hang me, if he talks in this way, if I don't have a shot at him."

"That's the way you gentlemen settle these things," replied Williams, with a grim smile, "and perhaps it's as good a way as any other. But here we are out of sight of the cottage, and so you can have it out with him; I'll see to this," he continued, taking three notes, which the young gentleman handed to him, "and now you can talk to him with a cool face."

By this time Captain Tankerville had halted at about fifty paces before them, and the other two joined him without delay, Alfred Latimer walking up to him with that firm and decided sort of air which is not without its effect upon bullies of all kinds.

"You talked of horsewhipping me, Captain Tankerville," he said; "that is all nonsense, for, in the first place, you have not got a horse-whip with you; and in the next, that is a game that two can play at; but if you think I have done you any wrong, I am quite ready to settle the affair with you, as gentlemen usually do."

"When and where?" asked the captain, with a sneer upon his lip. "You are what our good bailiffs used to call a slippery customer."

"Here, this minute," replied Latimer, stung to the quick; "here, I say."

"Ah! that's only because you think I have not the means of taking you at your word; but I'll show you that you are mistaken," was Tankerville's reply; and, putting his hands into his pockets, he drew forth his duelling pistols, and laid them down upon the turf, together with a powder flask and some balls. "You thought to get rid of me in that way, did you? You know well enough I never miss my mark."

"I've heard you say so," replied the young gentleman, glaring upon him with eyes in which there was much anger indeed, but no terror, for he was now roused to a pitch of daring which even the thought of death could not cool; and as he spoke he drew forth his pocket-handkerchief, and twisted it round like a rope. "That's one way, Captain Tankerville," he continued, "of making all shots equal, and ensuring fair play. So, you load one of the pistols and I will load the other; after which you shall take one end of this handkerchief and I the other; for if you kill me, I'll be hanged if you shall kill any one else. Jack Williams here shall give the word; and if either of us fires before the time, he will both bear witness and secure him."

"That's the right sort, sir," cried Williams with a laugh. But Captain Tankerville did not seem to relish the proposal; and crossing his arms upon his breast, without any motion to take up either of the pistols he had laid down, he stood gazing, with a frowning brow, at his opponent, as if considering what he should reply.

"I did not come here to commit murder," he said at length, "or to be murdered."

"What?" cried Williams, "a man who never misses his mark does not come down to commit murder. Pooh, nonsense. Will you fight him over the handkerchief or not?"

"What's that to you?" exclaimed Tankerville. No, I will not; but still I say he's played me a very shabby trick."

"You shan't say that any longer," replied Williams, doubling up the notes and holding them out towards him. "There's the money, it is not for that he stands, but of course he would not be browbeat by a bully, and you are no better, and mayhap a bit of a coward too. There, there's no use of saying any more. We have had your answer, and can't wait palaver-ing; but remember, if you don't pay him within two months I'll find you out and break every bone in your skin, if he doesn't."

There is a great difference, especially with a good marksman not very scrupulous as to taking little advantages, between a long shot at from eight to twelve paces, with an inexperienced opponent, and the very unpleasant alternative of the two ends of a pocket handkerchief. Captain Tankerville felt it fully, and did not at all approve of the latter. Now, he was not by any means, as Jack Williams suspected, a coward; but there are few men who would not a great deal rather avoid certain death, even with the consolation of taking an enemy out of the world along with them. Captain Tankerville, however, did not in any degree look upon Alfred Latimer as an enemy; nor did he at all want his life: he only wanted his money; and when that was offered him, although he did not at all like the tone which Latimer himself used, nor that which Williams thought fit to employ, yet he did not consider it worth while to lose a certain number of years, which he calculated upon passing pleasantly, in order to do away the disagreeable impression their scorn produced. He was a man of very nice calculations, and having summed up all the pros and cons in his head, he took the money proffered; but in order to get rid as far as possible of the appearance of sneaking, as schoolboys would call it, he exclaimed "Why the devil, Latimer, did you not let me have the money at first? I am sure I always wished to behave very friendly towards you; and if you had but said a civil word we should have had no quarrel at all."

Alfred Latimer turned upon his heel, saying, with a somewhat contemptuous look, "You came down here to bully, but you mistook your man; and you will now recollect that what I will do because I have promised it, or when I am asked civilly, I won't do for big words or angry looks;" and without waiting for any farther reply, he walked away with Jack Williams, leaving Tankerville to pick up the pistols and powder-flask, and stomach the disagreeable points of his situation as best he might.

He remained gazing after them for a minute or two with an angry face; and then with a toss of the head, placed the implements of destruction in his pocket, muttering "Well, perhaps I may pay you all I owe you some of these days."

With this satisfactory anticipation, which gives comfort to many a disappointed black-guard in this world, Captain Tankerville walked slowly over the moor, but he had also a still more substantial source of consolation for any mortification he might have suffered in the sum of fifty pounds which his pocket contained, and out of which he proposed to obtain some

thirty or forty pleasant days; for it never in the slightest degree entered into his mind to apply even a part of it to the satisfaction of those creditors with whom he had just been enabled to enter into an arrangement, as it is termed, by their discovering somewhat too late, indeed—that, though they might keep him in prison to all eternity, they would never be a bit nearer the receipt of their money. He had promised them very magnificently, that if they withdrew the detainers against him, and he could get a ship, he would make over to them two-thirds of his pay; and they had swallowed, or seemed to swallow, the bait, and, rather than plunge into any further law expenses against him, had agreed to his proposal.

While this scoundrel, one of the many whom we have had occasion to introduce into this work—and we beg the reader to remark that they were all very different scoundrels one from the other: Alfred Latimer, Jack Williams, Bill Malby, and the others, all being distinct varieties of that wide-extended genus—was thus pondering and walking on, his two late companions proceeded towards the cottage, Alfred Latimer having risen immensely in the estimation of Mr. Williams by the events which had just taken place. Williams, indeed, said to himself, "I thought he would come out so if he had a chance;" but Alfred Latimer had risen in his own estimation, too, though not in the best possible way. He had neither thought nor known that his resolution and vigor would go so far. He had dreamt wild dreams, indeed, of bold and daring actions; but they had all wanted confirmation, and now they had it. He had been tried; his courage had been found equal to the occasion; and he had taken his place as one who would shrink from nothing that passion or necessity required. Instead, however, of the firmness in right and virtue which such a consciousness might have bestowed, it gave him nothing but an impetus in the course of evil which he was already following. There are two paths before every man, the right and the wrong one; and every fresh power of mind or body that he acquires or discovers but burries him on, at every step farther and farther from the one he has not chosen. Well for those who make their first choice wisely.

While, with a firm and confident step, however, he was walking on towards the cottage, with some portion of the excitement under which he had lately acted still coloring his cheek and flashing in his eye, Jack Williams, of all men in the world, thought fit to read him a lesson in his own peculiar code of morality. "That was excellently done, Mr. Latimer," he said; "no one could have done it better; but you would not have been able to do it half as well, unless you had made up your mind to keep your promise to the vagabond. With that off your mind, you ran alongside of him like a schooner with the black jack flying, and he was glad enough to sheer off; but if you had known that you intended to break your word, you would have crept up like a dirty lugger that takes half an hour to reef her sails. Always keep a promise, for a man can stand anything with his heart free."

"Ay, I always intended to keep it," answered

Alfred Latimer; "but it had slipped my memory."

"Never let that slip," replied Jack Williams; "always look sharp after word given. The devil might have been a sailor if he had but looked aloft—but it was all very well done together; first, you kept your word—which is right to man or woman—and that without being bullied into it, and then you showed the bully in his true colors."

By this time they were at the door of the cottage, and there Alfred Latimer paused for an instant in thought, which did not seem the most pleasant, notwithstanding all the commendations he had received; but there was one part of those very commendations not the most agreeable to him; for when he had said that he always intended to keep his promise to Captain Tankerville he had spoken an untruth. The fifty pounds was too great a diminution of his small store to be parted with willingly; and he did not feel at all obliged to his companion for having handed over his money to his adversary so readily. Men, however, are in general—I might, indeed, say always—willing to assume the qualities imputed to them. It is one of the minor forms of that want of mental courage by which we are continually led to actions that we never contemplated; and, unwilling to show Williams that he was at heart different from that which the other thought fit to suppose him, Alfred Latimer mused over what was to be done to supply the deficiency in his purse, but made no comment aloud.

When he entered the little parlor he found Lucy seated at the table ready to set out, but with her eyes full of apprehension, for she had heard angry words without. She asked some questions of her lover in a low tone, to which he answered briefly, almost sharply, that he would tell her as they went, for they had no time to stay; and taking her by the hand he led her to the chaise, spoke a few words to Williams in regard to their future proceedings, and then directed the postboy where to drive.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A week passed over at Mallington in events which may require some mention, but so very long detail. Gossip and scandal, tittle-tattle and surmise, had ample room to disport themselves in the affair of Lucy Edmonds and Alfred Latimer; nor were the marvel-mongers less satisfied with the pleasant little occurrences of Mr. Morton having been knocked down so shortly after the knocking down of Mr. Gibbs. It was all very delightful, in fact; and if one could have looked into the hearts of half the people in half the houses in Mallington, it would have been found that as much comfort and amusement was derived from these two disasters as from a grand festival or a race ball. It might, perhaps, have enhanced the delight of many persons in the place if Mr. Morton had condescended to be dangerously ill for a month afterwards, or to die of a brain fever, brought on by the blow he had received; but he was obstinate, and would do nothing of the kind. On the contrary, though Mr. Nethersole insisted upon his remaining in the house for three days,

yet Morton, who felt himself quite well, submitted with reluctance; on the fourth day went out with Mrs. Charlton and Louisa in the carriage; and on the fifth was walking about as usual.

Nothing could be kinder than Mrs. Charlton was during the whole period of his convalescence; nothing could be more tender or considerate for all his feelings. The house was kept as quiet as possible; no parties took place; she assigned him as his own particular abode the small back-drawing-room, which looked down the hill; she was with him for several hours every day; and, when she was not, she invariably sent Louisa to amuse him and keep him from being dull. She was, in fact, wonderfully considerate, both as a step-mother and as a friend.

It must be confessed that Morton and Louisa availed themselves of her kindness to the utmost, and that they were very, very happy together, though Mrs. Charlton's conduct somewhat puzzled them both. However, they did not give themselves much concern about it; but, remembering the old adage of *carpe diem*, they made the most of the present moment; and every hour saw their love increasing and their confidence in each other and in their future happiness augmenting.

It is a pleasure and a relief to the mind to quit the society of scamps, swindlers, and blackguards, and to come back to the amiable and the good; nor are we slightly tempted to remain with Louisa and her lover, to dwell upon their conversations, to relate their words and thoughts, and to speak of all that passed between them, even at the risk of being accused of insipidity, but that other events greatly affecting them in the end, call for notice at our hands. Before proceeding to touch upon those events, however, it may be needful to tell how Mrs. Charlton bore the absence of her respectable son; and the strong suspicions which she, as well as everybody else, was forced to entertain regarding his abduction of Lucy Edmonds. She was a woman of great fortitude, and on no occasion of her life did she display that virtue more conspicuously than at present. When the news was brought to her that Alfred had left the cottage, and that there was every reason to believe he had taken Lucy Edmonds with him, her cheek did flush a little, her eye did flash; and it is not improbable that if her son had been at hand she would have given him a box on the ear; but she very soon recovered her serenity, and took rather a dolorous and lamentable tone with good Dr. Western (who broke the intelligence to her as tenderly as possible), grieved over the depravity of the world, moralised upon the sorrows which children bring upon parents, and shed a tear or two over the incorrigible vice of her own offspring. Nevertheless, with the truest philosophy, she soon became reconciled to that which she could not change, said a few discouraging words in regard to the pursuit of her fugitive son and heir, and before night, seemed to have forgotten the burden of her sorrows, so cheerfully did she bear them.

To Morton, indeed, she spoke a few words in regard to Latimer's conduct, expressing great regret that he behaved so unworthily; but declared that she thought it would be unwise to seek for him, and force Lucy away, as it was

very evident from what Dr. Western said that Edmonds would never receive his daughter again, and, her character of course being ruined, she would have no resource but a course even more vicious than that which she was already pursuing.

In this very philosophical view of the question Morton did not altogether agree; but he reserved what he had to say upon the subject for worthy Dr. Western, whose opinions he knew were likely to agree more with his own. In the meantime, however, two events occurred affecting himself which must be noticed, as neither the one nor the other were altogether without their effect, insignificant as one of them might seem.

A large packet arrived at the inn from London bearing his address; and being sent to the house it remained for some time upon the drawing-room table, under the eyes of Mrs. Charlton. She gazed at it with much curiosity; she would have given a great deal to have seen the contents. Who knows how far the irritating passion would have carried her, if it had not been for all the obstacles that lay in the way. But the packet was guarded with double and triple folds of thick brown paper, equal in the eye of law and decency to triple gates of steel. There was, moreover, the strong string which boys call lay cord, and every knot was sealed. Brown paper, string, and seals are dangerous things to meddle with. Unlike the worthy independent electors of towns and boroughs in our purest of all pure representative systems, they almost uniformly bear witness of the fact whenever they are tampered with; and Mrs. Charlton, knowing the danger of such a proceeding, judiciously refrained.

Virtue had its reward, for no sooner did Mr. Morton enter the room than, as if he could divine what had been passing in her mind and wished to gratify laudable curiosity, he took out a penknife, begged Mrs. Charlton's pardon for investigating the contents of the packet, and cut the string in a most wasteful and extravagant manner, displaying to her eyes as he unfolded the covers what seemed nearly a ream of large-sized drawing-paper, a vast number of Brookman and Langdon's black lead pencils, and sundry small cakes of water colors. It seemed, in short, as if he had made up his mind to teach all Mallington to draw; but, strange to say, nothing could be more satisfactory to Mrs. Charlton than the sight—not that she had the slightest intention of taking lessons herself, but simply because it confirmed her belief that Mr. Morton was exactly the sort of gentleman she wanted.

The other incident to which we have alluded was the arrival of a visitor to Mr. Morton from the great city of London. Exactly two days after his misadventure on the common, and about half an hour after the arrival of the coach at Mallington, some one rang at the bell of Mallington House. It will be recollected that at this time Morton had not yet been out since the accident, and he was in the little drawing-room we have mentioned, sitting with Mrs. Charlton and Louisa, when one of the servants announced that somebody wanted to see him.

Morton naturally inquired what sort of a per-

son it was, and the man replied, "A queer-looking sort of gentleman, sir, with knee breeches and white stockings."

"Pray, let him come up," said Morton; "or, perhaps, not to disturb you, Mrs. Charlton, it will be better to send him to my dressing-room."

But the lady would not hear of such a thing, saying that she and Louisa would go into the other drawing-room, that Mr. Morton might speak with the visitor.

That visitor, however, had to pass through the chamber to which she betook herself before he reached the one in which Mr. Morton remained, and consequently the lady of the mansion had a full opportunity of seeing his somewhat remarkable person. He was a man of five feet ten or eleven in height, and yet, strange to say, he looked short, for his breadth was out of proportion to his length. What was the girth of his shoulders we cannot take upon ourselves to say, and his chest seemed to have been modeled by nature from the form of a bull. His thighs, legs, and arms, were all strong and muscular, and the calves of his legs, though the ankles were fine and small, looked perfectly colossal in the white cotton stockings. As if he fancied that the eye of the beholder could not take him all in at once with sufficient accuracy, he had divided the superficies of his person into separate compartments, as the geographers mark out the different countries on a map by distinct colors. His back, shoulders, and arms were clothed in dark blue, his chest and stomach a little below the waist were bright yellow, his abdomen and thighs, including the knees, were drab, and the legs down to the shoes, as we have before said, were white. His head, too, was a remarkable head; the forehead by no means an unintellectual one, with the observing faculties very strongly developed, and combativeness, destructiveness, secretiveness, as the phrenologist call certain bumps at the back and sides of the head, together with the organs attributed to many another animal impulse, were wonderfully large and protuberant. The head altogether, however, was not very large, but it had a square stern character about it, and the face, though the features were not bad, had a look of shrewd daring cunning as its habitual expression.

The instant he followed the servant into the room—though the man said "this way, sir," and walked on towards the opposite door—Mr. Morton's visitor stopped for an instant, bowed to the two ladies, and then, in a moment, his eyes wandered over everything that the chamber contained. The glance was as rapid as light, but yet you could not help feeling that it marked everything with an accuracy very peculiar. One saw that it was not a general sweep, but that it went round by pulses, as it were, stopping at everything for the millionth part of a second, and then on again, from table to chair, from chair to china vase, from china vase to fire-screen, from fire-screen to picture, from picture to piano, from piano to music-stand, from music-stand to windows, from windows to curtains, from curtains to doors, and so on to the very handles and key-holes of the locks. It was a glance quite equal to Lord Burleigh's shake of the head, and as soon over, for on he

walked immediately, and followed the servant to Mr. Morton's presence.

"What a strange-looking creature," said Mrs. Charlton, to her step-daughter, as soon as the man had passed through the room. "I hope he is not one of Morton's friends; for though you know I care little about rank, yet good manners must be joined with acquaintances and connections at least respectable."

Louisa only smiled, perfectly certain that whatever the man might want with her lover, or her lover with him, there was nothing deserting the name of friendship between them.

So, indeed, it proved, for on the visitor's entrance Mr. Morton gazed at him as a stranger, and he, on his part, began the conversation by inquiring, in very good language, whether he had the honor of addressing Mr. Morton. The young gentleman replied in the affirmative; and the other immediately went on to say, "Well, sir, my name is Prior; and I was sent down by Sir Richard to speak with you concerning your pocket-book, according to your desire."

"Oh, from Bow-street!" exclaimed Morton, "I did not expect you so soon. Pray take a seat, and I will explain the whole matter to you."

Prior, the officer, according to this invitation, seated himself on one of the drawing-room chairs, holding his hat over his knees, and his body a little bent forward, and in that attitude received from Mr. Morton a clear and distinct, though succinct, account of the attack made upon him on the common, and the loss of his pocket-book. He uttered not a word while the particulars were related; he asked not a question, but, like a skillful physician, suffered the patient to state his own case before he commenced his interrogatory. In the present instance, indeed, the mind of the narrator was of that peculiar cast which brings easily and, as it were, naturally into one focus all the principal points of any question it has to deal with, and, therefore, at the end of the tale the officer had very few inquiries to make.

"He was a taller man, I think you say, sir," was his first question, "than the man who brought you home?"

"Decidedly," replied Morton; "if the person who struck me with the stone was the same that I saw by the edge of the pit."

"Can you give a guess how long you might lie there?" asked Prior.

"It could not have been many minutes," answered the young gentleman, "for as I reached the top of the hill in going, I heard Mallington clock strike nine; the distance from that spot to the cottage is about a mile, and when I came into the hall of this house with Williams, the hall clock was marking twenty minutes to ten."

"He must have been very near then, sir," rejoined Prior, "when the blow was given."

"That is true, certainly," replied Morton; but yet that does not prove that he had anything to do with it, or even saw it done."

"No, sir; but, as Sir Richard would say, it is a suspicious circumstance in the case of a man of bad character," was Prior's reply; and, after a moment's thought, he went on to say, "Well! there is no telling as yet, but I will go and make inquiries. I know one young fellow

down here of the name of Malthy; and though he is not likely to tell anything he knows, yet one sometimes gets a hint by finding out what it is that folks wish to conceal. However, I must have you tell me in the first place, sir, what it is you want—the man or the pocket-book. I think I shall have no difficulty in nabbing the one or getting back the other; but I doubt that I shall be able to manage both."

"Oh, the pocket-book, by all means, if it can be obtained with all its contents," answered Morton. "Indeed I have already ordered bills to be struck off, offering a reward for the recovery, and promising to ask no questions; but the lazy fellow of a printer has not done them yet."

"So much the better, sir," replied Prior, "don't you think of sticking them up. Leave the matter to me. If you will give a reward and ask no questions, we'll soon get the pocket-book back, never fear."

"The reward I proposed to offer was fifty pounds," rejoined Morton; "and I shall be well inclined to bestow on you, Mr. Prior, the same sum if you recover the papers for me."

"Thank you, sir; quite sufficient," replied the officer; "you may look upon the matter as done, if they have not tindered the stuff—I mean burnt the papers. First we must find out who has got the book, and then we must tame him a little. It may be Williams himself—it may be some other; and now I think of it, as I got off the coach I saw Captain Tankerville walking along with a slickery doll from London."

"With a what?" exclaimed Morton in much surprise. "Oh! what I call a slickery doll, sir," replied Prior laughing; "that means an over-dressed bad woman, and I should not wonder if there was a whole gang of 'em down doing business in different ways—cracksmen, and smashers, and prigs, and all. However, I'll look to that afterwards; the pocket-book's the first thing, and I'll just go and 'tablish myself at the Bagpipes, to see what's going forward; and, by your leave, I'll bring you up a report, sir, perhaps to-night."

"Do, do, Mr. Prior," answered Morton; "I should like to hear the steps you take as you go on. Good evening to you," and he walked after him to the door.

"In the name of fortune, Mr. Morton," exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, as soon as Prior was gone; "who is that odd-looking man?"

"Only a Bow-street officer, my dear madam," replied Morton; "you know I lost my purse and my pocket-book when I was knocked down on the common; and I thought it expedient to send to London to see what could be done for their recovery."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Charlton, and there the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The movements of Mr. Morton were very mysterious to the good people of Mallington. They did not watch him. Oh no!—they would not have demeaned themselves to any such pitiful practices in regard to any person, much less towards a poor pitiful painter, though he was

taken notice of by the gentlefolks, and held his head so high. But Miss Mathilda Martin could not help observing that though painters might, perhaps, sketch by day, yet she could not see how they could sketch by night. That was, she thought, quite out of the question; and yet Mr. Morton was more than once seen walking up to Mallington Park after sunset. Sometimes, too, he did it very slyly, as Miss Mathilda observed; for twice, instead of walking straightforward down through the town, like a man, he went by the back lanes.

Mr. Crump, who was one day in the shop while her observations were going on—for she was one of those who did not at all wish to conceal her opinions of other people—ventured to hint that perhaps Mr. Morton might have wished to call upon Dr. Western in his way, as the doctor was so fond of him. But Miss Mathilda, who had a touch of the spitfire in her disposition, immediately proceeded in the most approved fashion to neutralise Mr. Crump's defence of the young gentleman, by imputing personal motives for the unwonted candor he showed.

"Ah! you say that, Mr. Crump," she replied, "because he's always buying things at your shop."

"He always pays for them ready money, however," said Mr. Crump.

"Well, we may some day see the end of that," exclaimed Miss Martin, coming to her sister's rescue. "There was that Mrs. Latimer, when first she came she must pay ready money for everything, too; and yet I know that when that old fool Charlton took up with her, and made her his wife, she had not a five-pound note to bless herself with; and now that she is his widow, and got a large jointure, she is in debt to every person in the place, and I fancy in London too, if we knew all."

"I don't see why she should be so taken with Mr. Morton," said Mr. Crump, "if he isn't a man of fortune; for she's very fond of great people."

"Pooh, nonsense!" replied Miss Mathilda. "Birds of a feather flock together, Mr. Crump; and, if all tales be true, her own father was just such another as this Mr. Morton: a dashing impudent artist, or music-master, or something of that-kind, giving himself all the airs of a gentleman born, till he hooked in the Honorable Mr. Latimer to marry his daughter; and now this fellow is just playing the same game to marry poor Miss Louisa. I should like to spoil the job for them very much; for I can't a-bear to see a nice, pretty genteel young woman, of six or seven thousand a year, throw herself away on such a fellow as that."

"Well, it's no business of mine," said Miss Martin senior; "but I can't help wondering what makes him go down so often to the park. I thought at one time it was after pretty Lucy Edmunds he went, but now that she's turned harlot, and gone away with that young scamp Latimer, that can't be the object."

"I should not wonder if he went poaching the game," said Miss Mathilda. "Edmonds complains very much that there's continually some depredation committed; and perhaps that's where all his ready money comes from."

"Pooh, nonsense!" said Mr. Crump, who did not seem to have learned in Mallington that malignity scorns all the bounds of probability, and is not checked by gross absurdity itself.

"Pooh, nonsense!" cried Miss Mathilda. "You think yourself very wise, Mr. Crump; but you do not know half the things that go on in the world, I can tell you. I once saw as handsome and genteel a young man, and as well dressed, too, as ever you saw in your life, hanged for highway robbery. Sister and I paid one pound eleven and sixpence for a window, and saw him as plain as I see you. He was dressed in a suit of fine black, brand new, with a white broad-hemmed cravat and weepers on, and he had got a crape hat-band round his hat, as if he was going to his own funeral, poor young man. Quite a gentleman, I assure you. This Mr. Morton is nothing to him. Pooh, nonsense, indeed!—If it isn't 'poaching, it's something a great deal worse, I dare say. I know he has sent three or four large packages up to London by the stage-coach, and no one knows what was in them. I think the magistrate should be informed that he is always hanging about the park."

"You had better tell Dr. Western," said Mr. Crump. "There he goes down the hill."

"Pooh! Dr. Western's no better than an old woman," said Miss Mathilda. "No, if I tell anybody—and I've a great mind to—it shall be Mr. Middleton. He's something like a magistrate."

"I think we get nothing but odd people, whom nobody knows," said Miss Martin, who had got a little tired of the subject of Mr. Morton, and was less staunch upon the scent of a scandal of any kind than her sister, though the older dog of the two—"there's that man, now, down at the Bagpipes."

"What, Gibbs?" said Mr. Crump.

"Gibbs! no," replied Miss Martin; "though Gibbs and he are a good deal about together, too. I mean that great heavy, odd-looking man, with the low-crowned hat."

"Men say he's a Bow-street officer," replied Mr. Crump; "but I dare say they know little about it, for I cannot say I had it from the best authority."

"If he is, I'll warrant he's come down to look after this fellow Morton," observed Miss Mathilda.

"I've seen him twice walk up as if he were going towards Mallington House," added Miss Martin; "perhaps it was to watch what this Morton was about there."

"Ah! he'll be caught some of these days," rejoined her sister, "if he does not make haste to marry Miss Charlton, for gold is a salve for all sores, they say; but if he does marry her, her guardians are greater fools than I think them, and Mrs. Charlton's what I always thought her."

"And what's that, Miss Mathilda?" said Mr. Crump.

"That's nothing to nobody, Crump," replied the fair lady. "I know better than to speak out, whatever I think. So, go along with you."

And Mr. Crump did go; but the conversation in which he had taken part, was only a specimen of that which was held in various circles in Mallington. There were in the place, indeed,

two factions—a Morton's and an anti-Morton faction—but it is sad to say, notwithstanding all Mr. Morton's many good qualities—and they were conspicuous ones—the anti-Morton faction was by far the strongest. This may and ought to be accounted for; but the facts were these: All those whom he dealt largely with were his partisans; but as Mr. Morton was a single man, keeping up no great establishment, the number with whom he dealt largely was not great. The body of the rest of the townfolks hated him for two very sufficient reasons—first, because he did not deal with them, and, secondly, because they knew nothing about him, and would have liked to know something about him. He acted as a continual blister upon their curiosity; and all reasonable men hate a blister, wherever it is applied. Thus, Mr. Netherdale spoke with profound respect of Mr. Morton, though him a very distinguished man, evidently of very high breeding and great talents. This was because he had bandaged his head, bled him, and sent him sixteen draughts and three boxes of pills, for all of which he had been handsomely remunerated. The lawyer, on the contrary, ventured to sneer at Mr. Morton, talked about men of straw, shrugged his shoulders, and said people would see what would come of it, which, for a very discreet and silent man, was going somewhat far. But the reason was that Mr. Morton had never during his residence in Mallington employed half a skin of parchment or three inches of red tape.

Happily, however, the means were always in Morton's reach for wiping away such enmities whenever he liked it; and, if the real and very truth must be told, he cared nothing about them; but one day in the course of the week of which we have been talking, he extinguished at one blow the animosity of the worthy "Solicitor, &c." It so happened that as he was walking up the street, after a call at Dr. Western's, he turned sharp in at the office door, and asked one of the clerks if Mr. Skinner was at home. The clerk replied in the affirmative, and instantly descending from the perilous height on which he was perched, he opened a painted door which led into a room behind—the green door was hooked back—and announced to Mr. Skinner, who was writing letters within, that "the gentleman" wanted to see him. Now it would seem from the clerk's expression, and from Mr. Skinner's immediately comprehending what it was he meant, that there was only one gentleman in all Mallington—at least, in their opinion. However, out came Mr. Skinner immediately, with spectacles on his lung and somewhat fox-like nose, down which they slipped very nearly to the apex—as very well they might, considering the steepness of the declivity—and with a profound bow he ushered his visitor into the interior of his temple, where the clerks could hear a few murmured words, but could not discover their import. It is not improbable that the lesser of the two might, in the long run, have been tempted to put his ear to the door; but just as he had got one leg off the stool for that purpose, Mr. Skinner himself appeared, drew in the green door, fastened it within, and shut to the wooden one. All communication was now cut off; they might fret their hearts to bow-strings, or to fiddle-strings either, without discovering a word of what passed; but the result was that the

young gentleman remained with the elderly lawyer for nearly an hour, and at the end of that time Mr. Skinner showed him out with the most profound deference and humility. Not a word passed in regard to the subject of their intercourse—not a single syllable, though Mr. Skinner sat up that night till half-past twelve, writing letters and papers with his own hand, and ever after declared that Mr. Morton was indeed a very gentlemanly man, and evidently a person of distinction. His conversation, however, had no effect upon the rest of the citizens. Though his opinion was of value—though he was not a man to be done, cheated, taken in, deceived, or imposed upon, yet the great bulk of the good people of Mallington remained obdurate in their infidelity, and, headed by the Misses Martin, seemed only the more acerb and virulent from the loss of the co-operation of Mr. Skinner.

That very night there was a little party of four assembled to take tea at Miss Martin's; and how they did enjoy themselves! If Mr. Morton had been a haunch of venison, he could not have supplied them with more delicate food. They cut him up, and carved at him, and howed him into all manner of shapes. Mr. and Mrs. Dixon—between whom and the Misses Martin once raged the most deadly enmity—had now found favor with the two spinsters, and having amassed a little money, acquired a considerable fund of gossip, and increased in spleen as they grew old, were quite of the Martin coterie. They were their two co-operators on the present occasion, especially Mrs. Dixon, who was a tall, large-boned, gaunt woman, with the frame of a life-guardsmen, and the face of a hyena. Her character was a very determined one; she had no fears, no scruples; she herself declared that she always spoke out what she thought; and, to do her but justice, she did that and more, whenever the reputation of another human creature was concerned. She boldly pronounced Mr. Morton to be no more than a swindler; and when the junior Miss Martin communicated to her all her own doubts and suspicions regarding that gentleman, and the excellent grounds upon which they were founded, Mrs. Dixon replied "Well, Mathilda, if I were you and possessed all the information you possess, I would lose no time in communicating it to a magistrate: that I would. It's a positive duty, my dear."

"No, no!" said Mr. Dixon, who was a small, thin, palefaced man, with a reddish nose rather turned up, which looked as if he had always caught cold. "No, no, don't you meddle. If people is such fools to be cheated, let 'em be cheated. Why should you stop 'em. Put the case so, Miss Mathilda: let us suppose that Mr. Morton is a swindler, or anything you like—I say nothing, though I confess it looks very like it—well, but supposing that it is so, and you goes away to Mr. Middleton, or any one else, and tells him what you thinks upon the case. Well, then Mr. Middleton asks you for your proofs, and then there's a rumpus. You can prove nothing. Lord bless you! these swindlers take good care that nobody shall be able to prove nothing against them. If you're asked, if Mr. Morton ever said he was a gentleman born, you can't say he ever did. As far as I've heard, he never spoke a word about his self to nobody. No, no, he knows better. You can't

have him up for getting goods on false pretences, even if Miss Louisa were at the top of the lot. He might prosecute you for calumny."

"No, but"—replied Miss Martin the elder, who was fond of vigorous measures done dexterously—"Mathilda might go up to Squire Middleton's in a quiet slip-my-over kind of way, and tell him about the beautiful ribbons we have got from town, in case he should like to give some to his cousin, Miss Jones, as he did last year; and then she can slide in a word about Mrs. Charlton; and that will soon bring it round to Mr. Morton; and then she can tell him her mind, do you see, without making it a regular sort of eggs-o'-fishy information."

After much debate, thus was it settled that Miss Mathilda Martin should do; and thus she did do, not a little to the satisfaction of Mr. Middleton, who, to say the truth, had no great predilection for Mr. Morton, and who was well pleased to find that there were people in Mallington who liked that gentleman as little as he did himself. He communicated the fact to his two sons, who were equally delighted with their papa; and Miss Martin had the satisfaction of finding, not only that she had given pleasure to several of her fellow-creatures, but that she had also sold twelve yards of ribbon, at one-and-three-pence halfpenny per yard, by her manoeuvre.

CHAPTER XL.

IN the meantime, Mr. Prior had set about his work very quietly. Having secured a bed at the Bagpipes, seen Mr. Morton, and returned to the inn, he sat himself down in the commercial room, as it was called, and quietly considered his ground, and looked about him. He courted no conversation—he looked dull and reserved—he gave himself none of the airs of inquiry, or of Bow-street-officerism; but while he ate his mutton chop, and drank his pint of ale, seemingly not looking at anybody or anything in the room—though one glance as he entered had sufficed to gather them all up, and note them down in the pocket-book of memory—he overheard everything that was said around him, and judged, with the utmost professional skill, the characters of those who sat at the different tables round the room.

There was a pale man, with a blue beard, at one of these tables, dressed in a black coat and grey breeches, who sighed frequently over a plate of boiled beef and a glass of gin-and-water.

"A walker of the Tract Society," said Mr. Prior to himself, as he eyed him.

At another were seated two men—one in a blue coat and bright yellow buttons, with well worn, but not well cleaned yellow breeches, and top-boots sadly in want of oxalic acid. The other, with a green Newmarket coat, a fancy button, brown cloth trousers, and boots with spurs over them: a fresh-colored blue-eyed youth, with large lips, and curly light hair.

"Sound! Lord bless 'ee, you've only to look at her," said leather breeches, with a screw in his eye. "Why, I trotted her up that blessed hill this morning as hard as I could go. She's none of mine, or I shouldn't say so much about her;

but she's the genuine property of a gentleman who wants a little hard cash. So take her or leave her, just as you like. I've no interest in the matter. I'm sure to get twenty guineas more for her at Sturton, only I want to get on to Oxford, where there's to be a sale o' Tuesday."

"A horse couper and his cully," said Mr. Prior, internally. "He'll do him."

At a third table appeared Mr. Gibbs, with his long ringlets flowing, and dropping odors, though not wine. He looked about him, sadly at a loss for somebody on whom to bestow a description of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad. The horse couper was hopeless, for it was evident that his hair was never trimmed but with the same shears that cut his horses' manes and tails—never oiled but by the sweat of his brow, and only powdered by the dust of the road or the market place. To the dispenser of tracts, the Balm of Trinidad would have been an abomination. But the young country cully gave him some hope; for his fair curls were so crisp and dry as to excite Mr. Gibbs's compassion. He would have fain watered them on the spot with his fragrant balm, and was only waiting for an opportunity of fairly introducing its universal qualities to his notice, when Mr. Prior entered the room, and took his seat in the left hand corner. Mr. Gibbs's eye instantly followed him, and rested upon the close-cut black hair, which seemed as if intended to have a wig over it, with a look of great despondency. It was a hopeless field upon which he almost despaired even of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad producing any effect.

Nevertheless, the brief glance of Mr. Prior was sufficient to make that gentleman expect something more from Mr. Gibbs; and when, as he was proceeding with his mutton chop, the girl of the house entered, and Mr. Gibbs called her "Betsy," and moreover told her to tell "Mrs. Pluckrose" so and so, Mr. Prior was confirmed in his previous opinion, that he should get something out of Mr. Gibbs. "For," said he to himself, "he has been here some time, that's clear, and knows the place and the people." Prior bided his time, however, and listened attentively, when Mr. Gibbs, joining in the conversation between the cully and the horse couper, ventured to recommend to the former the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, much to the indignation of the latter, who did not like his dealings to be interrupted.

"He's a perfumer," said Mr. Prior mentally, and a minute or two after, Mr. Gibbs sat down, rebuffed by the brutality of the horse couper and the indifference of his chapman. After having finished his mutton chop, and drank his ale, the Bow-street officer called for a glass of brandy-and-water, and then, as if the icy shackles of reserve had been thawed by that warm and potent beverage, he put on a brisker look, gazed about him, and entered into conversation with his companions of the commercial room. He made his approaches by degrees, indeed—first speaking a word to the tract distributor, then saying something in a somewhat jeering tone to the dealer in horse flesh, which called for a pretty sharp reply.

"Ah, yes," answered Prior, "I've seen you before, I think. Weren't you the man that was

pulled up one day for selling two glandered horses in Smithfield?" and he looked him full in the face, as if he had known all about it, though, to say truth, he spoke but from a random suspicion that such an event might very well have formed part of his good friend's history at some period or another. The horse dealer repelled the insinuation with indignation; to which Mr. Prior merely replied, "Well, don't put yourself in a passion, I only asked you a question, my good friend;" and then, turning to Mr. Gibbs, he added, "Such a thing isn't unlikely to any man in his way of life, is it, sir?"

Mr. Gibbs did not venture an opinion upon the subject, but a conversation immediately began between him and the officer, while the two personages at the other table arose and quitted the room, probably to inspect the horse, which one of them had for sale.

"I thought it best to give that young fellow a hint," said Prior, in a confidential tone, "for I'm quite sure that jockey will do him, if he doesn't look sharp. I'll bet you a glass of brandy-and-water that the horse he's going to sell him is spavined, or sandracked, or broken kneed, or has some screw loose, or another, and yet he'll go and buy him, and pay a pretty penny."

"There's nothing so good on earth for broken knees," said Mr. Gibbs, "as the fragrant Balm of Trinidad. Why, my dear sir, it will make the hair come upon the baldest places: it would make the back of your hand in a fortnight like a bottle brush."

"It's not much unlike that at present," said Mr. Prior, looking down at his great hirsute paw; "but suppose, sir, we take a glass together. What shall it be? Hot with sugar, or cold without?"

Mr. Gibbs would take anything that his companion thought proper; and they were soon in full talk, during the flow of which the officer ascertained that Mr. Gibbs had been now for several weeks in that identical little town of Mallington. He moreover discovered that he was not exactly a perfumer, but the traveler for a great London perfumery house, and he asked himself, with the true inquiring spirit of his character, what could have induced such a person to pitch his tent for such a length of time in a spot that offered so few inducements to one of his calling. He found, likewise, that Mr. Gibbs knew something of almost everybody in Mallington; and, therefore, that his own sagacity had not deceived him in pitching upon him as an informant. There were certain subjects, however, upon which the worthy patron of the Balm of Trinidad was rather shy; for having his own views and determinations, and not knowing the character of his interlocutor, he could not divine that there, upon the chair opposite to him, sat the man of all others who was most likely to help him. Thus, when Mr. Prior propounded to him the following sage observation, "There's been a good deal of ugly work going on here lately, I hear," he merely replied, "So it seems."

"A gentleman has been knocked down upon the common and robbed a night or two ago," continued Prior.

"Yes, so I find," replied Mr. Gibbs.

The blue-bearded vender of tracts, over-~~heard~~

ing this awful notification, looked at the large clock over the mantelpiece, and having to walk five or six miles that night, drank up the remains of his gin-and-water, paid his score, and quitted the premises. Prior, however, sat immovably fixed opposite Mr. Gibbs, sipping the contents of his own rummer, and calculating what made his companion so reserved upon the particular subject before them. He resolved to pursue his point, nevertheless, and added, after a short period of reflection, "I should like to know somewhat more of that affair."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Gibbs. "Why so? How does it concern you?"

"Oh, it concerns me a little," said Prior; "I may tell you how by and by. Pray do you know anything of a man named Williams here?"

"Oh, yes," replied Gibbs, in an indifferent tone; "I know something of him, but not much."

"What sort of character does he bear?" demanded the officer.

"Why, the people about give him a very indifferent character," answered the traveler; "but I say nothing, for I don't like to speak what I can't prove."

"Quite right, Mr. Thompson, quite right," replied Prior, "that's the best way in every court."

"My name is Gibbs, sir," answered the traveler with a dignified air.

"Ah, yes, I beg your pardon, Mr. Gibbs," rejoined the officer; "nevertheless, I should like to hear something more of this Jack Williams. He helped the gentleman home, it seems, that was knocked down."

"He didn't help me home, though I was knocked down too," said Mr. Gibbs, in an incautious moment.

"Ah!—so you were knocked down too, were you?" was the officer's rejoinder. "Well, I should like to hear about that, too," and he proceeded to cross-question Mr. Gibbs in a way that gentleman found it impossible to escape from. By this means he wormed out of Mr. Gibbs the whole story of his adventure in Wenlock Wood—the apprehension of Williams upon suspicion—his discharge, upon what seemed to the officer very insufficient testimony—and, as one confession begat another, Mr. Gibbs ended by avowing that he was determined not to quit Mallington till he had discovered the robber.

"Whom you still suspect to be Jack Williams," said Prior, "notwithstanding all that's said and done."

"No, no," replied Mr. Gibbs, "I didn't say that; I suspect nobody."

"However, I'm different," said Prior, "for I suspect everybody. That's part of my trade;" and leaning his two arms upon the table, he bent his head over them, saying, in a low tone, "I am an officer from Bow-street, Mr. Gibbs, and have come down to look after this affair; but that's between you and me. I don't wish people to know what I'm about, and perhaps shouldn't have told you, if it hadn't been that I've been seen by one chap that knows me; so it's likely to come out any way, which is a pity. However, you and I can chat the matter over, and I'll tell you one thing to begin with. Williams was the man who knocked you down, you

may be sure of that; and if he did not do this other business, he had a finger in the pie."

Mr. Gibbs no longer affected to deny the suspicions that he really entertained, but, delighted with the prospect of such aid and assistance as he was likely to receive from a Bow-street officer, poured forth the long dammed-up stream of his communicativeness, told all that he had done—how he had watched, spied, and dogged the object of his doubts—and gave Mr. Prior a full insight, as far as he could give it, into everything that had taken place in Mallington during the last month.

Prior congratulated himself upon his success, and bestowed great commendations upon Mr. Gibbs's skill, perseverance, and ingenuity, exclaiming, "Why, with a little teaching and practice you would do for the office, Mr. Gibbs; but now I must find out this fellow Williams, and have a talk with him."

"Oh! that will be easy enough," replied the traveler, with a knowing wink of the eye; "he's a great friend of mine is Jack Williams. I invited him here to drink a bowl of punch with me, and tried to get him to change a ten-pound note, because, you see, amongst the guineas I had about me when I was robbed there was one of Queen Anne, with the least little bit filed out of the edge, so that I could have sworn to it; but he was too deep, and he wouldn't change the note; and I don't know how it was, but either the punch must have been very strong, or something; for by the time we got to the end of the first bowl I felt as drowsy as if I had drank a whole bottle of the American Soothing Syrup, and in a minute or two after I was sound asleep."

"You must have left the room for a minute," said Prior.

"No, I didn't," answered Mr. Gibbs; "nor the table either—yes, by the way, I did leave the table; I went to get out some of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, but that was only at the other side of the room."

"Ay, he focussed your liquor for all that," replied the officer; "he must have been up to something that day, and didn't want to be watched."

Mr. Gibbs mused for a minute or two, and then said, "I dare say you're right, for that was the very day when that wild young blade, Mr. Latimer, carried off the park-keeper's pretty daughter, and Williams had a hand in that affair I know"—and then came the whole story of Lucy and her abduction by Mrs. Charlton's son.

Prior listened attentively, picking out from the somewhat long-winded statement of Mr. Gibbs whatever suited his own purpose, as throwing light upon the character of Jack Williams, just as an industrious sempstress, from a great bundle of thread, chooses out those skeins and colors that are necessary for the work she has in hand. He had settled it in his own mind long before this that if indeed Williams was not the man who actually struck the blow that brought Mr. Morton to the ground upon the common, he was an accessory either before or after the fact; and it was a great object with him to get such an insight into his habits and disposition as would enable him to recover Mr. Morton's pocket-book in the speediest manner. When the whole story was brought to a conclu-

sion, however, he returned to the charge about seeing the person in question, and Mr. Gibbs professed his readiness to lead him that moment to the house where Williams lodged. The officer was not inclined to delay; and out they both sallied into the streets of Mallington. Near the door, however, they suddenly encountered Captain Tankerville, with an extravagantly smart, but somewhat brazen-looking lady on his arm, and the meeting did not seem particularly satisfactory to that respectable gentleman. For a moment—for a single moment he appeared to hesitate whether he should recognize Prior or not; but the devil of habitual impudence had possession of him, and he gave the officer a cool, condescending nod, such as the fashionable gentleman might bestow upon a person whom he had employed in such functions as those of the police.

Prior understood the matter perfectly, perceived all the most minute springs and wheels that were moving in Captain Tankerville's mind, but did not choose that they should produce the result intended, and, therefore, passing, with a familiar shake of the head, he said, "Ah, captain, you down here! What's the go now? I should think that this was no lay for you. There can't be much business doing in your way here."

"I wanted a little country air, Prior," replied Captain Tankerville, moving on.

"Why, I heard you had been taking country air over in Surrey," answered the officer, with a laugh; and he too pursued his way with Mr. Gibbs up the hill, asking his companion as they went "whether that chap had been long down in those parts?"

"Oh! dear no," answered Mr. Gibbs; "the first time I ever saw him was yesterday."

"I was thinking," said Prior, "whether he could have anything to do with these jobs. He's just a likely fellow to put other men up in a bad piece of business, and then turn stag. It won't be long before he weighs his weight now; and so if he's had any hand in this, we could soon get at it from him."

"I don't think it," answered Gibbs. "He's never been here before since I've been in the place, and this has been going on a long while."

"Well, we shall see," answered Prior; "but we'll talk to Williams first. You show me where he lives, and I'll go in and have a chat with him."

"Oh! I'll show you directly," replied the traveler, "and then we can talk more about the matter when you've done with him."

The two worthy gentlemen, however, were disappointed in their expectations. Gibbs led his companion up the hill, and then some way down a lane which branched off from the edge of the high road just opposite Mallington House. First came two or three poor cottages—then a field and a garden—then a small red brick house, with some cakes, parliament, gingerbread, and apples in the window; while over the door was inscribed "Pickett, dealer in tea, sugar, coffee, snuff and tobacco," and this was pointed out to the worthy officer as the present abode of Mr. Joan Williams. As on enquiring in the shop, while Gibbs walked slowly up the lane, the reply of the woman of the house was, that her lodger had not been home for two days,

and that she did not know when he would return.

"Are you sure he'll return at all?" asked the officer, in a cynical tone.

"Oh dear, yes," replied the woman; "he's sure to come back, for he's left all his things."

Prior paused for a moment with an unusual degree of hesitation. His habitual propensities impelled him strongly to walk up stairs, and to examine into the facts and circumstances of what things Mr. Williams had left behind him; but recollecting, that in order to obtain what Mr. Morton wanted, he must "do his spiriting gently," he forbore, and merely requested the worthy lady to inform Mr. Williams that a gentleman had been to see him; that he was lodging at the Bagpipes, and would be glad of a call as soon as her lodger came back.

He retraced his steps, hurrying his pace, a little to overtake Gibbs, and soon perceived him walking slowly along in conversation with another person. With his keen quick eye Prior scanned the figure of the good traveler's companion, while a slight smile curled his lip; and then walking up to the personage who was still busily talking with Gibbs, he laid his broad hand heavily upon his shoulder. Bill Maltby, for he it was, turned round with a start, and the moment he saw Prior, turned as pale as death.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Ah, Master Maltby, you down here!" said Prior, fixing his keen eye upon the other's countenance, and marking the waning color in his cheek with a slight smile; for the ancient Bow-street officer, he of the potent old school—long since softened down into what is called a preventive force, which, God wot, prevents little to compensate for the evils that it perpetrates or encourages—he of the ancient school, I say, which could really detect the criminal almost as soon as the crime was committed, and which commanded the best means of prevention by ensuring immediate punishment, felt some degree of self-satisfaction at the awe with which his presence affected any notorious offender.—"Ah, Master Maltby, you down here! Still upon the small go, I suppose; nothing heavy yet, or I should have heard of you, Master Maltby."

Although the speech of the excellent Mr. Prior was not altogether pleasant to the ears of Bill Maltby, especially being delivered, as it was, in the presence of Mr. Gibbs, yet it was so far satisfactory that it showed him that the especial errand of the worthy officer in Mallington did not refer to himself. He therefore replied with a re-assured countenance, and in a civil tone, "Oh no, Mr. Prior; I am down here on my native place, living a very quiet life now."

"I dare say," answered the officer in that peculiar tone which implied that he dared to say nothing of the kind. "Well, we shall see, Bill; but there's one little thing I should like to speak to you about—as a friend you know, quite as a friend, for I am only taking the country air, traveling incog. for my amusement, like other great men—no business in life, Bill, but just a little holiday—so if you could just make it convenient to give me a call at the Bagpipes

some time this evening, I should like to have a little talk with you about one or two things."

"Oh, I'll come, certainly, sir," replied Bill Maltby, who was quite sure that if Prior wanted him for any unpleasant purpose he would have had the handcuffs on him in less time than it had taken to speak one quarter of what he had uttered; "at what time shall I come?"

"Why, in about an hour," said Prior; "then we can have a glass of wine together. In the mean time, I want to talk a little with this gentleman;" and though Maltby did not altogether like the prospect of any long communion between Mr. Gibbs and his friend of Bow-street, he had no excuse ready for, not walking away, which he did, reiterating his promise to come at the appointed time.

No sooner was he gone than Mr. Gibbs proceeded to inquire into the personal character of Mr. Maltby; and when he heard the circumstances of the officer's acquaintance with him, he in return related the fact of his having been wheedled over to Sturton on the very day when he was knocked down and robbed.

"Ah!" said Prior, in a meditative tone; "then he's a confederate of Jack Williams, is he? I thought it must be so; but we'll try if we can't make the decoy duck quack as far as is needful. A pretty gang of them there seems to be hereabouts just now; but our London gents do love, every now and then, to see a bit of country life. He must be a shrewd hand, this Jack Williams, not to take your flimsies, Mr. Gibbs. You won't be able to do anything with him; for, take my word for it, he's got as sharp an eye for a Queen Anne guinea as you have; and I'll bet you any money it's in the soup-pot long before this time."

"He'll not stop there, sir," replied Mr. Gibbs, "depend upon it, he'll not stop there. When once a man begins he's sure to go on."

"Ah! there you're right, there you're quite right," replied Mr. Prior. "That shows you know something of life, Mr. Gibbs; and as soon as he weighs his weight we shall have him."

In conversation of this kind they pursued their way back to the Bagpipes; and the officer, to use the reporter's term, subjected the worthy traveler to a searching cross-examination in regard to everything and everybody in Malling-ton; after which Prior retired to his own chamber, and ordered a bottle of wine, much to the astonishment of Mrs. Pluckroae, who entertained a notion that wine was only fit for gentle-folks, in which class she had not thought fit to include her new guest. Shortly afterwards Bill Maltby, true to his appointment, appeared at the inn-door; but had very nearly been sent away again, as Prior had not thought fit to communicate his name, and it was only by description that the barmaid was at length brought to understand who was the person asked for. When at length all difficulties were overcome, and Mr. Maltby was ushered up to the officer's room, which was tolerably high in the building, he was received by Prior with a sort of condescending courtesy, requested to seat himself, and had his glass filled with wine as a preliminary. He looked a little anxiously for the commencement of the discourse; but Prior filled his own glass, nodded, and gave "The King." When this toast was drunk, the officer

filled again for both, and then, scratching a certain spot a little behind the temple, which was accustomed to be scratched upon important occasions, he entered upon business.

"Well, Mr. Maltby," he said, "so you are down here taking your native air. That's right, that's quite right. Here's your health. You are a young man who know how to take care of yourself, and I dare say may go on a long way, if you don't go too fast. But what I wanted to say is this, you are acquainted with a gentleman of the name of Williams, I think?"

Maltby nodded his head.

"And do a little business with him in a quiet way, I dare say," continued the officer.

"Oh dear, no," answered Maltby; "I've given up that sort of thing; and besides, Mr. Williams is quite a different sort of person. He's only here for a while till he gets another ship, and spends his prize money."

"Come, come, now," answered Prior, in a tone of jocular reproach; "as if I didn't know, Bill. What's the use coming that lay with me. Besides, I am not looking after the young man to do him any harm; I've got no warrant against him, bless you; I've got a little bit of business to do with him which may turn to his good. So, if you know where he is to be found, speak out like a man."

"No, I don't know," replied Maltby; "I haven't set eyes on him these three days, and was going up to see if he had come home when I met you. But what is it about, Mr. Prior? Perhaps I can help you, notwithstanding."

"Ah! that's another affair," answered Prior, meditating; and Bill Maltby ventured to add "If it's about the job of that fellow Gibbs, you are mistaken, I can tell you. Jack Williams wasn't in Mallington at the time."

"You were," answered Prior, turning his eyes suddenly upon him.

"That's neither here nor there," answered Maltby, with a perceptible change of countenance. "He wasn't, that's sure."

"He might not be very far off, though," answered the officer, with a grim smile; "but, however, it's not about that at all. I've nothing to do with that, and I mind my own business. I know what I know, and if it were needful, could take you all over the ground, and show you how he came, and how he went, and where he stood, just as if I had seen it all. But as I said, that's no affair of mine. I've no warrant. What I'm after now is this business of Mr. Morton's; and look you, Bill, I'm determined—and you know I'm the man to do it—either to have the papers or to have the men. The money they may keep, and perhaps may have a trifle more, of twenty pounds or so, if they give up the pocket-book quietly and quick."

"I didn't know any pocket-book had been taken," answered Maltby; "and if it has, most likely they've burnt it. They're not likely to keep a sticky thing like that."

"Then I'll have the man," said Prior, in a determined tone.

"Well, I can't help you there," replied Maltby, drinking down his wine with a gulp; "I know one thing I'm very sure of, Williams was not the man to knock the gentleman down. Of that I give you my honor."

Small rogues are men of honor as well as great ones—in their own particular way.

"I'll have him, and the other fellow, too," answered Prior, "and then, you know, Master Maltby, that this business of Gibbs's must be gone into; so you can judge whether that will be pleasant, and had better look to it. 'It will be much better for them to give up the papers and the pocket book quietly, and then they can go on till another time, you know; but if they don't they're done; and some others may find themselves in a mess, who, if they don't cut capers, would find themselves lagged to Botany for life; and that's not pleasant.'"

"No," said Bill Maltby, in what we romance writers call a tone of deep feeling; and thereupon he fell into a fit of meditation, which lasted several minutes uninterrupted.

"Does the gentleman suspect Jack, Williams!" he inquired at length.

"Lord bless you, no," replied Prior, laughing, "he thinks him a very honest fellow, as I dare say he is in his way. I don't mean to say he knocked him down; but there are such things as accessories before and after the fact, my good sir; and, even if he were to get out of this, there's weight enough upon him, I can tell you, to pull the rope tight, if things were looked into; and it's much better a young man should be quiet, and give up a trifle like this pocket-book, which can be of no use to him, than to hang about shilly shally for the chance of a better reward. Twenty pounds is very handsome, I think, and I dare say the gentleman wouldn't stand for five pounds more or less."

"Well, I tell you, Mr. Prior, upon my soul, that Williams had nothing to do with it, I know," answered Maltby: "and I can't tell anything about the papers, for I never heard of them; but I think I know where I can find out whether they are burnt or not, and, if not, I dare say they'll be given up."

"If they are given up, all may be kept as still as an empty trunk," replied Prior: "if not I must have the men, and then there will be some precious work. You must be quick, however, Bill; for you see I can't dawdle away my time and let matters slip; we must go to work at once either one way or the other."

Bill Maltby fell into a new fit of thought, and rubbed his head continuously, as if to stimulate the organ of cogitation. At length he brought forth, as if by a jerk, the following question, "Would you mind taking a long walk with me to-night, Mr. Prior?"

"Not particularly," replied Prior, "I want a little exercise."

"Well, I think," said Maltby, "I could get you to speak with a young man who knows something of this job; but mind, it's only upon condition that you do nothing against him."

"Not to-night, not to-night, of course!" replied the officer. "Honor, Bill!—honor! I'm upon a negotiation now; and I know what that means as well as the best plenis of them all. Before I begin active operations of course I shall declare war; but it's to be the same on both sides, remember. We must have no traps, Bill."

"Oh dear, no, Mr. Prior," replied Bill Maltby. "That would be devilish little good; for though

you're keen enough, there are plenty more besides yourself; and you always behave pleasant and gentlemanly, which is more than many of them do."

"Well, I'm your man," said Prior; "only I must just go and tell that Mr. Gibbs that I can't drink tea with him to-night. We had better set out at once, I think, for it's beginning to grow duskish."

"Let it get a little darker first," replied Maltby, "for I don't well know how these fellows may like it."

"That's just as you please," replied Prior; "and we've got the bottle to finish, too; so you take another glass, while I go and tell Gibbs, for he's expecting me, I think."

Thus saying, the officer left the room; and Bill Maltby helped himself to another glass of wine; but that was the only movement that he made. He did not even venture to look round him, but remained seated where he had first taken up his position, as if he were afraid that Prior might see on his return if his chair were moved in the least degree out of the same situation. Throughout the whole of their conversation, as the reader has, doubtless, observed, the swaggering, bullying dare-devil has been changed into the meek, compliant, very humble servant of the officer; and such, indeed, was the influence of those myrmidons of old Bow-street, that it seldom if ever happened, in dealing with habitual ruffians, that they met with anything like resistance. It was only when they came to encounter—as in the case of poor Smithers with the Cato-street gang—some persons who from accidental excitement had jumped at once to a great crime, that they were opposed with anything like violence; and it is a well known fact that a single officer would venture unhesitatingly into one of the most notorious dens of London, and pick out a man, who knew his fate was sealed, from the midst of a whole gang of foot-pads, housebreakers, and murderers, without any one of them ever dreaming of an attempt to rescue their companion or injure the officer. The utmost courtesy, too, existed between the rogues and those who apprehended them; and when a man was thus taken up, in the midst of his companions, there was no swagger, or threat, or loud announcement of his purpose on the part of the officer; but, merely beckoning him out, he was wont to say, "Mr. So-and-so, I wish to speak with you for a moment," in the civilest tone possible, though he was about to take him to prison and to death; and it generally happened that the man's only reply to this fell summons was, when they were alone together, "Pray, don't put the darbies on me," with an assurance that he would go along quite quietly unmanacled. Such was the effect produced upon every individual of a large class of men by the mere aspect of those to whom the law entrusted the terrible task of watching their proceedings and bringing them to a close when their guilt reached a certain point of enormity; and Maltby was fully under that impression, well knowing that there were many acts, even in the course of his short life, which brought him within the reach of the iron arm of justice. In the present instance, indeed, there was a predominant fear that awed him into the most

submissive tranquillity in the presence of the officer. It were needless, and perhaps unfair, to inquire whether it would have induced him to turn informer and betray his companions; but it certainly would have brought him to do anything short of that. The part which he had taken in the robbery of Gibbs was perhaps sufficient, as the law then stood, to put his head within the unpleasant circle of a rope. He had prompted and planned the robbery—he had shared the spoil—he had been an accessory, both before and after the fact—and it was clear to him that Prior very well knew the share he had in it. Men who have committed evil acts are always inclined to suppose that others who suspect them have better information than they really have; and he attributed the hints which the officer had given regarding the real state of the case, rather to actual knowledge than mere suspicion. It is, indeed, conscience that makes cowards of us all; and he sat considering the fearful phantoms of his imagination, and thinking how he might drive them from him, till Prior returned.

In the meanwhile that worthy gentleman had visited Mr Gibbs, and though he entertained no positive fear or hesitation in regard to accompanying Bill Maltby, whithersoever he might lead him, yet he thought it might be just as well to take some precautionary measures, and consequently asked his new-found friend to watch which way he and his companion went, without actually dogging their steps, and to sit up for him till he returned.

"If I'm not back by twelve," he said, "it may be as well to seek for me. Not that I think anything is likely to happen; but still you know men's blood will get up, and they may take a drop or two of spirits more than needful, and then there's no saying what they may do. So I shall leave you, Mr. Gibbs, to look out for me."

This being settled, the officer returned to the room where he had left his companion, eyed him well to ascertain what he had been about during his own absence, finished the bottle according to their previous determination, and then proceeding to the goods and chattels which lay in the window he drew forth a tolerably large pair of pistols.

"It's always as well," he said, examining the powder in the pans, and pressing down the ramrod tight in each. "It's always as well, Mr. Maltby, to be provided with the barkers, though I am quite sure you would not behave ungentlemanly towards me. However, I never go far without them, and so there's no offence in putting them in my pocket."

"Oh, no, none at all—none at all," answered Bill Maltby. "but you'll not have to use them, sir, I can tell you."

"Likely," answered the officer; "but now let's go. It will be quite dark before we are up the hill."

"We're not going up the hill," answered Maltby. "But I'll show you the way," and accordingly he walked to the door.

We have led the gentle reader, by the hand, all about the little town of Mallington, along the road over the common, and the sandy way which skirted it, by the cottage where poor Lucy Funnada passed her first night of absence

from her father's house, down the back lanes, and through the fields to the water side, and along the river, by the rectory, back to the bottom of the hill. We have also led him across the bridge, and through several of the paths of Mallington Park, along the road on that side of the river, and up the sandy lane leading away to Wenlock Common and Wood. Then, proceeding across the heath, we have taken him, in company with Jack Williams, after his assault upon Mr. Gibbs, round by the other side of Mallington Park and back to the bridge. If we had been the surveyor of the roads for that district, we could not have laid them out with greater accuracy—all except one. Have you ever looked upon a map, dear reader, in which a river figured as the principal object? you must have found that, if there was a bridge over it, it generally presented you with the letter H, the bridge forming the cross of the letter, and a road on either side the two limbs. Now our H wants one of its very principal parts, which must be immediately supplied. That is neither more nor less than the superior portion of the left hand limb. The highway through the village, which was called Mallington-street, taking a little turn round the angle formed by the inn, swept over the bridge. On the right hand it was joined by the road to the rectory and the church; but we have said nothing of any way, highway or by-path leading further up the river on the Mallington side, and have thus, perhaps, left the reader's imagination to suppose that the inn named the Bagpipes, its gardens, sheds, or outbuildings, actually abutted upon the river, or else that fields and hedges closed the way, and left nothing but the milkmaid's path and the urchin's beloved stile. Such, however, was not at all the case, and we must hasten to correct this geographical error. The road from the church, the rectory, and the country beyond, did indeed enter upon Mallington-street, and afford a means of communication between the village and the neighboring residences; but it did more—it crossed the highway, and was continued along the bank of the water, sometimes approaching close to it, sometimes leaving a meadow or two between, as the circuitous process of nature deviated from the straightforward proceeding of art.

It was up this road, then, that Bill Maltby, on the night in question, led Mr. Prior, shortly after the sun had set under the horizon. There was more light, however, than the former personage had calculated upon; for though the evening was somewhat grey, and thin wreaths of white mist might be seen twisting about upon various parts of the stream, yet the twilight had not completely ended, and in many parts the river shone out clear, reflecting all the light that still remained in the sky. Bill Maltby walked slowly, and his companion did not hurry him on, letting him follow the bent of his own inclinations, but at the same time watching all his proceedings with a keen and shrewd observation.

"He wants to prevent me finding my way back," said Prior to himself; "but it won't do," and then remarking that, as they came to the side of some meadows left by a sweep of the stream with a footpath across them, Bill

Malthy lifted his head and looked across, but still seemed inclined to follow the high road, though the foot-way evidently joined it further on, he asked aloud, "Had we better not take the path, Bill! it's shorter."

Bill Malthy assented, merely murmuring something about its being damp; and then, after a short interval of silence, observed, "You seem to know this part of the country, Mr. Prior!"

"Oh, I know something of most parts," replied the officer; and on they went.

At the distance of about a mile from the village, it became as dark as it was likely to be, and about half a mile further Malthy deviated from the road they had hitherto been pursuing, and struck into some very intricate lanes upon the left. They were melancholy lanes enough, too—not overhung with embowering shrubs and bushes, but generally with a ditch on one side and some stunted willows on both. The land was flat and unpicturesque, though doubtless affording good feed for cattle; and, as the meadows were not unfrequently under water, the road was generally raised above them. On the left, however, was some high ground, and towards it the two wayfarers gradually approached, though Prior shrewdly suspected that they might have reached it by a much shorter cut. At length the lane they were pursuing entered between two abrupt sandy banks crowned on either side by some young fir plantations, after which it issued forth upon a wide track of wild unproductive ground, where patches of cultivation, encircled by young hedges, amidst a quantity of moor land, showed that efforts were making to reclaim for the use of man a portion of the soil from the waste. It was with difficulty that Prior's eye, although accustomed to a good deal to mark objects in the night, caught the indications of the sort of country he was passing through; for the darkness was by this time profound, and no convenient moon shone forth to light the traveler on his way. When they had gone about a quarter of a mile on the moor, however, near a clump of black-looking trees, which, lifted up upon a little elevation, showed themselves more distinctly than any object around, he thought he perceived one of those tall, single, many-storied houses, which people of a peculiar taste occasionally build upon commons, generally for the purpose of a roadside public-house. No ray of light, however, flashed forth from any window, and for some way the officer was not certain whether fancy did not deceive him.

At length, however, Bill Malthy stopped, and after some humming and hawing, communicated to the officer that he thought he had better go on, and inform the good folks of the business they had in hand. "I may tell them of course, Mr. Prior," he said, "that they're all safe if they let you come!"

"As safe as a babe in the cradle," replied Prior. "You know me well enough, Bill, and what sort of man I am. I'm never afraid of doing anything I have to do straightforward, so I've never any occasion to tell lies about it."

"That's true—that's true," answered Malthy; "so, if you'll just wait here for five minutes, I'll go and tell them, and be back again."

Prior agreed to do so; and the young man

left him, walking on in the direction of the house which he had seen. When he was gone Prior put his hand in his pocket, took out one of the pistols, felt the pan with a delicate and scientific touch, rammed down the ball once more, to make sure that it had not slipped down in the barrel, and then replaced it in his pocket, leaving the butt to hang out, so as to be ready for his grasp in a moment. All this did not in the least show that he was afraid; for, as I have before said, fear or hesitation were not things that easily entered into his mind; but he was eminently a man of preparation—he was always ready for whatever might come, and always making himself ready for what was to come next; besides the examination of his pistols was a sort of pastime of which he was fond; and it was serviceable in the present instance by occupying a minute or two of the time he had to wait.

Bill Malthy, indeed, was longer in returning than he had promised; and Prior had full opportunity of examining to the best of his ability the objects round the spot where he stood. Notwithstanding the darkness, notwithstanding the monotony of the scenery around, his habitual powers of observation were such as to enable him to mark accurately several different points, for the purpose of recognizing the place again, if ever he should be called upon to visit it; and in order to leave no doubt of the matter, when he found that his companion did not speedily re-appear, he walked up to a thin pollard that stood by the side of the road, and, taking a large knife out of his pocket, cut a deep notch in the bark.

At length, after waiting about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, he heard a quick step, and advancing, was met by Malthy, who said in a low voice, "Come, sir, come; they will speak with you, though they don't like it at all."

"They must be fools," said Prior, "not to like to get a inator of twenty or five-and-twenty pounds for some scraps of paper that they can do nothing with."

"That's what I told them," said Bill Malthy.

"Have they got them still," asked Prior, as they walked along, with the house we have mentioned growing more distinct as they came near.

"I can't tell," answered his companion. "They didn't say; but you'll soon find out. However, Mr. Prior, it will be all in the dark, for they won't let you see them."

Prior made no reply, but cogitated. He did not much like the idea of going into a place with which he himself was unacquainted, tenanted apparently by a body of men of a daring and violent character, well acquainted with every turning and winding that it contained. He knew and understood the risk; but yet it did not make him pause or hesitate; he only bestowed a little meditation upon the means of insuring himself as far as possible; and consequently, when they came to the door of the lonely and desolate-looking building to which his companion led him, he quietly slipped his hand into his pocket, drew out the two pistols, and, with the one in his right hand and the other in his left, followed Bill Malthy into the dark and narrow passage.

"This way," said his companion, turning

through a door on the left; and immediately the officer had entered, a rough harsh voice, apparently proceeding from a room beyond communicating with the first by an open door, demanded "Who is there?"

"It's I and Mr. Prior," replied Maltby.

"Well, you can stay where you are," rejoined the voice; "we can talk as we are without his coming further. What does he want?"

"Why, I want Mr. Morton's pocket-book, and the papers that are in it," answered Prior.

"And why the devil should we give them to you?" rejoined the voice.

"Oh, for several reasons," answered the officer, "which I'll tell you as soon as you let me know whether the papers are safe; for, if they are not, there's no use of talking any more about it."

"Oh yes, safe enough!" rejoined the voice. "Now for it, speak out."

"Well, then," said the officer, "I have been sent for from London, in order to get them. The gentleman's content, if they are restored, to let all other matters sleep, and, moreover, to give a reward of twenty pounds for them. So, if you've a mind to hand them out, why you can either let me have them now, or send them to me by Mr. Maltby here."

There was a low murmuring at the other side of the partition, as if two people spoke together; and then the voice answered, "They are worth more than that."

"Well, I dare say the gentleman won't stand for five pounds," answered the officer; "but you know, my good fellow, if you ask too much, you may chance to get yourself into trouble. There's a bit of Bow-street to be set against the value of the papers; and it's much better worth your while to take a fair offer, and let the matter pass quietly, than risk your neck in the hope of getting more."

"Oh, my neck's in no risk about it!" answered the man. "I've not got the papers—I'm only speaking for another."

"I hear that," replied the officer, dryly; "and we are both the same in that respect, for I'm speaking for another too."

There was a short pause; and at length a new voice said, "It's better that principals should deal together; so you may tell Mr. Morton that he shall hear from the person who has got the papers in a day or two, and then he can have them or not at the price put upon them, as he likes."

Since his entrance into that room Prior had used his best endeavors to gain some knowledge of the interior, and as his eye became more accustomed to the obscurity—for there is seldom anything on this earth so utterly deprived of light as to deserve the name of actual darkness—he had made out not only that there was a window upon his left hand, but, also, that there were several broken panes in it, and that that there was an open door on the other side. Beyond that, however, he could see nothing; but he marked with strong attention the tones of the two speakers, so that he thought he could swear to the voices whenever he heard them again. The proposal of the person who had last spoken was not by any means agreeable to him, as he foresaw a possibility of its depriving him of a part, at least, of the sum promised for ne-

gociating the restoration of the papers. It must not be supposed, however, that in his proposing the sum of twenty, or five-and-twenty pounds, instead of fifty, which Mr. Morton had offered for the recovery of his pocket-book, he was influenced by any corrupt desire of transferring the rest to his own pocket. On the contrary, he had only begun with the small sum, in order to leave himself an opportunity of increasing it to the extent permitted, according to circumstances. But, nevertheless, he did not like to be curtailed of his own fair proportion, and he therefore answered, after thinking over it for a moment or two, "Come, say in a word what you will take, and let us see whether we can't make a deal of it at once. It's better than hanging fire about the thing, because you see I must do my duty one way or another, and if I don't get the papers I must do the other thing."

"You've got your answer," said the second voice in a stern tone, "and that's all the answer you'll get."

"It's an answer that doesn't quite suit me," replied Prior quietly; "but I'll let you hear more what I think of it to-morrow."

"What, I suppose you are afraid of losing the reward," said the second voice, after a short unmurmured consultation, the words of which were indistinct; "but as you have opened the way for him, the gentleman will have no right to refuse you whatever he promised, and if he does it shall be made up to you."

"Much trust there is in that," answered Prior. "However, I'll think about it, as I said before. You say you'll let him hear from you in a day or two. Well, I'll tell him, and talk with him about the matter, and so good night. All I can say further is, that you'll be great fools if you suffer yourselves to be lagged up to the office by sticking out for too high a price. Many a man has put his neck in a noose by such a go as that; so you look sharp about it."

While he had been thus speaking he had gradually approached the door as silently as possible, and in a minute after stood on the outside of the house. He had heard some whispered conversation, indeed, as he went; but he did not think fit, after the very significant hints which he had given, to wait for the result. Comparatively the atmosphere without was clear and light after quitting the dark room, and Prior walked along the road back towards Mallington without waiting for his companion. Maltby, however, soon overtook him; but the officer was in no very good humor with the success of his operations; and the only words that passed between them till they reached the entrance of the town were spoken when Maltby endeavored to lead him by another way, which elicited from the officer the following observation, in a grumbling tone: "It's no use, Bull, I know the road as well as you do. You call upon me about twelve to-morrow, and I'll tell you more. Those fellows will make a mess of it if they don't mind; but it's their own fault, so there's no help for it."

CHAPTER XLII.

It was at an early hour of the morning, a very early hour indeed, not yet half-past five—and,

as the astronomical reader well knows, the sun in the month of September begins to show that laziness which creeps over him in his declining days, and does not rise so early by an hour or two as he does in his lusty prime—when Mr. Morton crossed the bridge at Mallington on foot, with a double-barrelled gun under his arm, and a game-bag over his shoulder. There were few people stirring in the village at that hour, with the exception of a laboring man or two walking away to his daily toil; but whoever saw the young gentleman, and marked his attire, naturally concluded that he was going out to shoot, and yet several of them noticed as they passed that he had no dog with him, which excited some surprise, as he had no establishment of keepers in the neighborhood, and was, consequently, they concluded, not likely to be supplied by the way. Perhaps these remarks would not have been made in any other place than Mallington, but it unfortunately happened that during the last few years almost all the peasantry had acquired both a taste for, and a practical knowledge of, the pleasures of the chase, and viewed everything referring to sporting with the eye of a connoisseur.

Mr. Morton, however, took his way onward with a quick step, entered Mallington Park, and crossed it by a path which, making an angle of forty-five degrees both with the river and the road to the house, passed behind the latter at some distance from it, and wound away through some of the wildest parts of the domain. In that direction lay the favorite haunt of the deer, who seldom came down into the more trim and decorated part of the park near the river, except to drink in the cool moonlight; and here, to the shady groves and broad clumps of beech, and elm, and oak, succeeded a wide tract of tall fern or short dry grass, sprinkled over with numerous hawthorns, while here and there appeared a solitary chestnut tree of immense girth, spreading out its long limbs wide enough to cover a whole herd. The sun had risen, it is true, but was not yet high enough to overtop the neighboring woods and hills; and though the sky was full of light, the dew of the preceding evening lay thick and white upon the grass like a hoarfrost, or hung upon every thread of the spider's web, like a fairy net-work strung with gems. The park was quite still and solitary, as far as the human race was concerned, but not so in regard to the wild creatures, who, following the warning voice of nature, wake up to the enjoyment or to the strife of the day with the first ray of the rising sun. The tall deer were already standing in herds, or stretching their long slender limbs amongst the fern, and on a broken sandy part of the ground innumerable rabbits were hopping about, till, startled by Morton's approaching foot, they bustled away into their burrows, terrified at the sight of the great general oppressor, man. Wild birds of various kinds, too, were seen, either in the air, on the ground, or amongst the branches. A hawk hovered over head, watching for his prey; a glistering cock pheasant started from beneath a low holly bush, as the young gentleman brushed it in passing; a hen partridge trotted off with her young covey, without thinking fit to take wing; and a curlew, with its long wings, swept away towards the wilder and

more barren country beyond the park. Morton, however, showed no inclination to begin the warfare so soon, and walked quietly on, with his gun still under his arm, till he reached the park paling on the side next to the heath, and had crossed the tall stile leading to the sandy road on the other side. There, however, he paused, and charged both barrels, examining the flints, for percussion caps had not been then invented, and taking care that the priming was well and orderly disposed in the pan. This being done, he walked across the heath in the direction of a clump of firs upon a little mound, which I think has been already mentioned, and soon perceived, seated on the first rise of the ground, three stout men holding a couple of brace of dogs, with two or three young lads. At their head was Edmunds, the park-keeper; and as soon as Mr. Morton was within about a hundred and fifty yards he advanced to meet him, and spoke a few words in a low tone.

"No, it is not needful," replied Morton, "there is no danger, my good friend. Merely let one of the boys go with me to the wood to show me which is the path mentioned, and I will rejoin you in a few minutes. You would hear my gun, of course, at that distance."

"Oh yes, sir," answered Edmunds, "no fear of that, the wind sets this way."

"Then unless you hear it you need not move," rejoined Morton; "if you do you may as well come to seek me."

While they had been speaking they had walked on towards the trees; and then one of the lads, having been selected from the rest, accompanied the young gentleman to the edge of Wenlock Wood, where the very path entered which had been pursued by Mr. Gibbs on his unfortunate expedition. There Mr. Morton left him, and, bidding him return to the keepers, walked on alone, with his gun resting easily on the inside of his arm so as to be brought forward at any moment without delay. The path, as we have before described it, was sometimes narrow, with the shrubs and young trees standing forward so as scarcely to leave room for two persons to pass abreast, sometimes wide and open where the bushes were low and scattered, either pursuing its direction in a single line, or dividing into two to sweep round some thicker clump of brushwood, or some saplings that had grown up in the midst of its course. With a slow step, and not without caution, the young gentleman continued to advance, turning a keen and quick eye to the foliage on either side; for so severe and so recent a blow as he had unexpectedly received might well teach him watchfulness against a concealed assailant. He had gone about two hundred yards from the edge of the wood, when he thought he heard some murmuring as of persons speaking low at a little distance in advance, and he paused for a moment to ascertain the fact. All was silent again, however, the next instant, and, thinking he had deceived himself, he walked on with a slow and quiet step. The trees were there close and thick, but a little beyond they opened out into the sort of wild scattered tract of woodland lying at the foot of the high bank to which we have before traced the steps of Alfred Latimer. The brighter light and freer air were

just making themselves perceptible, when suddenly the voices were again heard, and Mr. Morton stopped, saying to himself, "The letter assured me he would be alone." The next instant, however, it appeared that he had made up his mind to go on, and, proceeding at a quicker pace than before, he was soon in the open ground, where, to his surprise, he beheld the form of Mr. Gibbs himself, busily engaged, as it seemed, in pointing out to Harry Soames, the constable of Mallington, the spot where he had been robbed. He performed the task with all due grace and eloquence, showing the spot where he had been assailed, the way which the plunderer took after depriving him of his property, and the very tree behind which Williams had concealed himself while lying in wait for his coming. The sight of these two personages was by no means agreeable to Mr. Morton, on his present errand, and, wishing not to be interrupted, he was drawing back to give them an opportunity of finishing their perquisitions, when the quick eye of the traveler fell upon him as his head and shoulders overtopped the brush-wood that lay between.

"Ah, Mr. Morton—Mr. Morton!" exclaimed Gibbs, as he perceived the young gentleman turning away. "We are nobody but friends here. You need not be alarmed, though it is such a murderous sort of place."

"I am not alarmed in the least, Mr. Gibbs," replied Morton; "but I was not in search of society at present."

Mr. Gibbs, however, would not take the hint, replying with a knowing smirk, "In search of feathered bipeds, I presume. I was just pointing out to the good constable here the place where I was knocked down and robbed, for I can't help thinking that those fellows must have a rendezvous somewhere herabouts."

"Not at all improbable," replied Morton in a dry and discouraging tone. "The place looks very well fitted for such a purpose."

"Oh, I'm quite sure of it," rejoined Mr. Gibbs, not to be stopped, "for, with my glass, I saw Jack Williams walk up to the edge of the wood yesterday afternoon, and Bill Maltby follow with another man about half an hour after. I knew the one by his walk, and the other by the switching of his stick, and so we came up so early just to see if they had left any traces behind them."

"Have you discovered anything," demanded Morton.

"No, sir," replied the constable, fixing his two hawk-like eyes upon him; "but I think we shall before we've done."

"Well, I wish you success," said the young gentleman, and walked on for about a quarter of a mile through the wood. He then returned, thinking that in all probability the traveler and his companion would have abandoned the pursuit by that time, but he found them seated on the stump of a tree very near the spot where he had left them, discussing some viands which Mr. Gibbs had taken care to bring with him in a pocket-handkerchief, and, merely bowing his head in answer to their salutation, he walked on along the path, and, rejoining the keepers on the common, shot his way back through the fields on the other side of Mallington Park.

Mrs. Charlton's larder was well stored with

game that afternoon, but we will not tire the reader by the description of Mr. Morton's exploits in the field, or of the gamekeeper's admiration of the coolness and precision of his aim. On the contrary, returning to the worthy traveler and his companion, Harry Soames, we must take some notice of their conversation after Morton passed them a second time.

"I wonder who that fellow is," said the constable in a meditative tone.

"I dare say you do!" answered Mr. Gibbs, with a shrewd smile.

"What makes you say that in that sort of way, Mr. Gibbs?" rejoined the constable. "It was just as if you would have said 'I could tell if I liked.'"

"Oh dear, no!" answered the traveler; "I didn't say anything like it. I only said I dared say you would, because nobody seems to know, and everybody's curious."

"Well, I doubt that he's after any good," observed Mr. Soames.

"Pooh, nonsense," said Gibbs, "what harm can he be about?"

"Why, I don't know; a good deal, perhaps," replied the constable. "Didn't you see that when he caught sight of us he was for turning back, and then he only walked a little bit further and came round again. What should bring him up here at this hour of the morning?"

"Ay, that I can't say," was Mr. Gibbs's reply. "He might have business, you know."

"Ay, pretty business, up here before six o'clock," answered the constable. "I'll thank you for a bit more of that ham, Mr. Gibbs."

"Why, he might say the same of us," observed the traveler, presenting his companion with a slice of ham on the end of his knife.

"That's quite a different affair," answered Harry Soames, in the intervals of mastication. "In the first place, I'm an officer, and have business everywhere. Then you told him what we are about at once, but he took care not to say a word of what he was after."

"Pooh, it's all nonsense," replied Mr. Gibbs; "I've good reason to believe that he's quite a gentleman."

"Ay, ay, because he's bought some of your d—d stuff, I'll warrant you," rejoined the constable; "but let me tell you, Mr. Gibbs, that many a rascally clerk passes for a gentleman when he comes down to the country, after having cheated his employers, as long as he's got any of their money to spend."

"You know nothing about the matter," answered Gibbs, in an offended tone, "and I know what I know. Mr. Morton's a gentleman and a man of property—I'm sure of that. Don't you see what a friend he's of Dr. Western's?"

"That's nothing to do with it," replied Soames; "for I can tell you one thing, Mr. Gibbs, and that is, there isn't a man more easily done in all England than the good doctor. I'm not the only one, I can tell you, that fancies there's something odd. One-half of the people of Mallington have their doubts; and it's only two days ago that a magistrate, who has as much cunning in his little finger as Dr. Western in his whole body, told me to keep an eye quietly upon a certain gentleman, because he had had information, though not on oath, that he isn't

what he pretends to be, and that though he gives hints of his being a great person, yet he may turn out a very little one. Hark! there goes a gun—both barrels, by Jupiter! I'll bet you a pound he's poaching Mallington manor. He'd better not let Edmonds catch him, I can tell him that, for he's not one to stand nonsense."

What further reply Mr. Gibbs might have made, on the spur of the occasion, to his companion's suspicions of Mr. Morton, was interrupted by the incident of the report they both heard; but still, although the worthy traveler believed that he had excellent reasons for supposing that gentleman to be a person of high respectability, yet such is the nature of calumny, that when adroitly put and pertinaciously supported, it still leaves a shade of suspicion even on the minds of people who have many good reasons for knowing its falsity. Mr. Gibbs began to think that Morton's conduct, especially that morning, was somewhat odd, and to ask himself if he might not be deceived—nay, if he might not have aided to deceive himself. He would not give up the young gentleman's cause so easily, however, and, after a few minutes' cogitation, replied, "I dare say you would find, now, that Edmonds has given him leave to shoot for a day."

"I don't know," answered the constable, "but one thing I certainly shall do, and that is to tell him that some one has been up here with a gun, and who it was."

"That you can do, if you like," replied Mr. Gibbs; "but I should think that poor fellow Edmonds was in no way to take notice of such things."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the constable, "one would think you were laquaisical, Mr. Gibbs. Why, the girl has been gone a week last Tuesday, and he has had plenty of time to get over it. People do all manner of things the first day or two, but they soon learn that what can't be cured must be endured."

"Well, I should think that Edmonds was a man not easy to teach that in his daughter's case," answered Mr. Gibbs, who was, in truth, a man of some feeling himself, and what is even more rare, of some pertinacity of feeling. "I should think he was one to brood over it for ever!"

"Not he," cried Harry Soames, with a laugh; "why, I've seen him twenty times this week just going about his business as if nothing had happened; and one day, when I stopped him to tell him all I had done to find Miss Lucy and Master Alfred, he sent me as short as Miss Martin cuts a yard of ribbon, saying, 'You need not give yourself the trouble, Soames. I wish to hear nothing about it,' and so he walked off, and began to order the people about rolling the lawn, as if nothing were the matter in life."

"Well, it is very odd," said Mr. Gibbs, "I couldn't lose a daughter so—but there go the guns again."

"Ay, I bet there will be a fine large basket go to London by the night coach," observed the constable; "but come, Mr. Gibbs, let us be wagging. It's not my business to watch poachers, or I would have that fellow up. He'll be caught out some day, however, and

that you'll live to see if you stay at Mallington long enough."

"I shall stay till I have seen the end of this thread," replied the traveler, "if I set up a shop on my own account. However, I have a fortnight's leave yet to come and go upon, and Mr. Prior said he would come down again in a week."

"And what can he do more than I can!" asked the constable, who did not at all approve the admiration which Mr. Gibbs had more than once expressed of the thief-taking powers of the Bow-street officer. Those Londoners make a great piece of work, but they can do no more than their neighbors."

"I don't know," answered Gibbs; and without further observation followed his companion back to Mallington.

CHAPTER XLIII.

In the course of human life, as society is now organised, with all its wheels and springs and mechanical contrivances for rendering everything regular, and securing precision in all affairs, there are certain moments of recurring interest, varying in every town, and perhaps in every family, when some particular event occurs each day, breaking the monotony of ordinary existence, and affording a brief space of bustle and activity to thoughts which otherwise might go on sleeping like dormice for long months at a time. One of these moments, in almost every house in the land, is that of the post's arrival; when those little mysterious packets of white paper and black strokes call up in the breasts of those to whom they are delivered, a thousand imaginations of that which is within. And what, indeed, may not be under that seal? What strange, what sad, what joyful revelations of feeling may not one glance of the interior produce! Where is the fancy so dull and heavy—where the heart so apathetic as not eagerly to forestall the intelligence, even while the fingers are breaking the wax, and fly through all the mazes of probability, even though certainty is close at hand.

As the reader already knows, or ought to know—for we have already told him in a preceding part of this tale to which he may have occasion to refer more than once hereafter, and, therefore, if we have forgotten it, or passed over it as an incident of no consequence, he is very much in fault, every incident herein mentioned having its due bearing and relevant connection with all the rest, and with the end of all—the post came into Mallington in the middle of the night. Nevertheless, according to the system of those days, when slow and sure and dear and good were the maxims of locomotion and commerce, instead of quick and hazardous, cheap and nasty, the great principles of the present time—the letters were not delivered, at least at the further end of Mallington, till between nine and ten; the address of every despatch being carefully examined by the postmaster, and the whole sorted and re-sorted with a deliberate slowness, which greatly retarded the process, but insured perfect regularity as the result. Thus, at Mallington House the urn was hissing on the table, Mrs. Charlton was

putting in the tea, the coffee-pot and eggs were in expectation, the partridge pie upon the side-board was uncut, and Morton was bending slightly over the table to speak some light and casual words to Louisa, with a tone and a smile that gave them meaning to her ear—for they took very little pains to hide the feelings of their hearts from Mrs. Charlton—when in came the butler, and put down three letters to the lady of the house and two to Mr. Morton. There were newspapers besides; but the letters were looked at first, after due apology; and those received by Mrs. Charlton certainly did not seem to be of a very pleasant nature, from the effect they produced on her countenance. The two which came to her guest were of very different shapes and qualities. One was a large and voluminous packet, costing an immense sum of postage, for Rowland Hill was not then in operation. The second was a smaller epistle, and by no means displaying the neat and tidy exactness which characterised the other, either in folding, sealing, or address. It was a shabby-looking concern, with the name of the gentleman for whom it was intended, written in the right hand corner, Mallington House in the left, and Mallington underneath, in a most unsymmetrical and anomalous position. The seal was a broad patch of wax pressed down by a spade guinea, and the paper of that peculiar quality which is dealt out in single sheets at a hundred per cent. profit by the keepers of chandlers' shops at a penny a sheet to maid servants who wish to write love letters.

As Morton, however, had received a similar letter three days before, and divined whence it came, he opened it first, when his eye was greeted with the following communication:

"Sir—You behaved like a gentleman and a man of honor this morning, for I saw all that went on, though nobody saw me. So, if you like to come up into Mallington Park about eight o'clock to-night, we'll talk about the papers, which are quite safe, and I think I can get them for you. I don't ask you to come to the same place, because I think you might not like it at that hour of the night; but I'll be down in the park at that time, somewhere near the rabbit warren at the back of the house. If you'll stand out from the trees I shall see you, and I know you are too much of a gentleman to take advantage. You'll be quite safe yourself, for that I pledge my honor."

No name was signed, and after having read the letter, Morton put it in his pocket and opened the other epistle. The cover contained various papers, apparently from the hands of a lawyer, and as Mrs. Charlton quickly glanced her eye across, she saw sufficient to make her divine that it was a power of attorney. Within the whole was a small note upon neat paper, written in a nice clean business-like hand, to the following effect:

"My dear young friend,

"Allow me to call you so, and to thank you for your invitation. The partridges must wait if they will, and fly away if they won't, for I am tied to London till October. Then, by your good leave, I'll see if I cannot bring down some of the pheasants, with their long tails behind them. If ifs and ands were pots and pans we

could do without the paper, as you say; but the law knows no such thing as an if. It is a positive science, my dear sir, and very positive indeed in its way. It will have all the proofs it can lay hold of; and, though too much pudding may choke a dog, the gullet of the law is much more capacious, and though occasionally it may strain at a gnat, is more frequently inclined to swallow a camel. Get the paper if you can, however, but don't give too much for it, as though it forms a link, it is but a small one; and we can prove the death by other means, though expensive ones, I fear. However, it is just as well to bring over an Italian priest and an English consul, as to bribe a British thief too high. Don't walk upon commons too late any more; for your head, I think, must show you by this time that a pitcher never goes so often to the well but it comes home broken at last. I will send you down a clerk in the course of to-morrow to take your signatures to the papers enclosed when you have looked over them, and, in the mean time, you will believe me,

"Your faithful servant,

"T. QUATTERLY.

"P.S. The clerk I send is a great scamp, so do not trust him with money. I keep him to look after insolvents and fraudulent bankrupts. Set a thief to catch a thief.

"T. Q."

Mr. Morton made no other comment upon his letters but by a smile, and put them in his pocket, but Mrs. Charlton was evidently disturbed with the contents of hers for the rest of the day, and passed a part of the afternoon writing letters. The same evening's post carried away from Mallington three neatly-written, beautifully-folded, and exactly sealed notes, addressed to "Messrs. — and —, jewellers, New Bond-street;" "Mrs. —, dealer in British and Foreign lace, Conduit-street;" and "Messrs. —, silk mercers, &c., Piccadilly."

Mrs. Windsor looked at them all with careful attention, and observed, in a murmuring tone, to herself, "It won't do much longer, in 'am, I can tell you. You'll have to play your trump, or you'll lose the odd trick. I wonder what she can be waiting for. I should think the pear was quite ripe."

When the letters were written a load seemed taken off Mrs. Charlton's mind; and after having left Louisa and Mr. Morton alone together during the whole afternoon, she appeared at dinner all smiles and gracefulness. It is a pity that she had grown a little too stout, otherwise she was certainly a very fascinating woman. After dinner, however, Morton announced that he had a little business to transact, but would be back shortly; and, going to his room, he furnished his pockets with a brace of pistols, and proceeded towards the rendezvous which had been given him by letter as we have seen. The streets of Mallington were usually more full of people at that hour than during the day, for they were an active and industrious race of beings, as the reader may have observed; and when they had done their own business, they were sure to occupy themselves with other persons'. Taking little heed of whom he met, or what faces gazed at him from the shop doors, the young gentleman walked down the hill, crossed

the bridge, and at once obtained admission by the gates into Mallington Park. Then, leaving the keeper's house and the hall to the left, he followed nearly the same course which he had pursued on his shooting excursion two days before, and was soon on the spot where he had seen the rabbits. He there paused and gazed around him, but it was now quite dark, no moon up, and the sky somewhat cloudy. The tall trees falling into thick masses, indeed, could be seen sweeping round through the dim night air, but there was no more light left than to show the grander objects at a distance, and to transform the smaller ones into strange shapes as fancy lent them form and members. Under one of the old hawthorn-trees Morton at first fancied that he saw a man seated, but presently he remembered having perceived the withered stump of an old tree in that direction under the shadow of a younger one. Then, again, he thought that he perceived a figure moving in the tall fern, but recollecting that it was the great haunt of the deer, he concluded that what he beheld was some watchful buck keeping guard over his companions; and going a little further forward into the open space, after having waited about three minutes, he asked aloud if any one was there.

The moment after he heard a slight rustle amongst the thicker trees, and then clearly distinguished a human form advancing with a quick step towards him. Morton kept his position, however, examining the stranger as he approached, and gaining every instant a stronger and stronger conviction that it was no other than Jack Williams, who had given him such serviceable assistance on the common. In a few minutes the man was by his side, and, without any attempt at concealment, addressed him at once with "Good evening, Mr. Morton; you walk late, sir."

"So do you, it seems," replied Morton; "but business brings me here, as it brought me to the common when first I saw you." He paused, and as Williams made no immediate reply, added, "When I found you here, Mr. Williams, I imagined that your coming had some reference to the business I allude to."

"Perhaps it has," answered the sailor, and then again stopped and seemed to hesitate.

Morton was not altogether pleased with this conduct, and although from the manner in which the man had aided him when injured and bleeding on Mallington common, the frank confidence with which he had accompanied him to Mrs. Charlton's house, and the apparently sincere expressions of regret for the event which he had used on that occasion, Morton had believed the suspicions of the Bow-street officer to be totally unfounded, he now could not help supposing that Williams had had some share in the outrage, if he had not actually committed it.

"Well," he said, "I am here to communicate with any person regarding the recovery of my property—property which is valuable to me, though of no use to the persons who have taken it, and if you can give me such information as will enable me to regain it I am willing to reward you handsomely for the service rendered."

"We will see about that, sir," answered Williams, "but there are first one or two things to be settled. It's better that principals should

deal together. Now, if I tell you who has got your pocket-book, and all it contains, will you give me your word of honor, as a gentleman, that you will never proceed against him by the law for taking it?"

"No," replied Morton at once; "I will not give you any such pledge, as it is undoubtedly my intention if he refuses to give it up to proceed against him, and punish him with the utmost severity. However, I will give you my word of honor that if he does give it up I will take no steps against him of any kind, either for taking it or any other part of the affair."

"That won't do, sir," answered Williams, in a determined but not uncivil tone; "and I'll show you why. You and he might not be able to agree about terms; then the information I gave you might put his neck in a halter, so that you would have all the advantage in driving the bargain."

"I understand what you mean," replied Morton; "but it is not at all my object, believe me, to gain the advantage you mention; and I am quite willing to pledge my honor that I will use the information you give me in no way whatever against him. If, as you say, we cannot agree about terms, I will tell you what my course will be. To send once more for a Bow-street officer, and, upon the information already obtained, direct him to apprehend all such persons as he may have just cause to suspect, but I will furnish him with no new information which I may have obtained from you, or through your means. The case shall stand exactly upon the same ground on which it stood before our meeting. If that will suit you, well and good; if not, we had better converse no more upon the subject; for my mind is made up, and I can promise nothing farther."

"That is all I meant," replied Williams; "I meant that we should start fair, and that when I have told who the man is that has got your pocket-book, and given you the means of communicating with him directly, you shouldn't be able to turn round upon him, and say, 'Now I know who you are, if you don't do just as I like, I'll hang you.' I have your word of honor, then?"

"You have," replied Morton; "but I can't help saying you seem to trust very confidently to the word of a man you don't know."

"Oh, I'm not often mistaken," replied Williams; "a real gentleman's just as soon found out as a real rogue, and I'm not at all afraid about you. But now for it. You want to hear who has got your papers—I have, sir."

"I am very sorry to hear it," replied Morton, in a grave and serious tone.

"Ay! and why should you be sorry?" asked Williams, very much struck with the young gentleman's manner.

"Because," replied Morton; "I thought better of you; because I have deceived myself in regard to your character, and, from your whole demeanor and conduct, assured Prior, the officer, that you had nothing to do with the assault upon me, or the robbery which was afterwards committed."

"You were quite right, sir; and, for once in this world, a gentleman has done me justice," replied Williams, in a tone of deep feeling. "If every one had judged so from the beginning, I

should not have done half the bad things I have done. Nevertheless, knocking you down, and taking your money, or your pocket-book, is not against me on the ship's books. I did neither the one nor the other; and I would have stopped it all if I had come up in time. The pocket-book came into my hands by accident, but having got it, I think I've a right to drive a bargain about giving it back again."

"I should have imagined," replied Morton, "that a man who shows so much good feeling upon some points as you do would have been rather inclined to restore it to its owner, when you knew who he was, and to trust to his gratitude for recompense."

"Pooh, trust to any one's gratitude!" said Williams, with a snuff; "that will never do. However, I meant to have given it back to you, but for circumstances. But the truth is, sir, I've got things to do which will make or mar me, and I must have five hundred pounds."

"Then am I to consider," asked Morton, "that such is the price you put upon the papers in your possession?"

"Yes, sir," replied Williams. "I know their value to you as well as you do, and they are worth that."

"You must know their value better than I do," answered the young gentleman, lightly, "if you put such a price upon them, for certainly I will not give it."

"Then, d—n me if I do not burn them!" cried Williams, more irritated by the half laughing tone in which Mr. Morton spoke than by his mere refusal to grant such an exorbitant demand.

"In that you'll act as you think fit," replied Morton; "but of this be assured, that the papers are not of the value to me you suppose. I have means of proving the facts to which they refer, which may, indeed, cost a certain sum, but not near so much as you require; and I am not at all disposed to pay largely for the recovery of papers taken from me by a gross act of violence, when I can do without them, though their loss may entail some trouble and expense."

The man muttered a curse of angry disappointment, but made no direct reply, and, after having waited for a minute or two in expectation of some answer, Morton proceeded to say, "You will probably think better of this, and I give you till to-morrow night to consider of it; warning you that the expense likely to be created by the loss of these papers, as calculated by my solicitor, is about two hundred pounds, and, consequently, that your modified demand, whatever it may be, must be within that sum. You can let me hear your determination before to-morrow night, after which it will be too late to make any change."

"D—n me, if I don't burn them," was Williams's only reply, and Morton, bidding him good night, turned and walked away.

He passed through the thicker trees; and entered upon the open space beyond, at the back of Mallington Hall, thinking, as he walked on, that he heard the sound of a heavy fall, as if something had dropped from one of the beeches by the way; as he came upon the little rising ground which commanded the greater part of the park, the glistening waters of the stream could just be seen over the woody ground in the

bottom, affording a bright background to the slope below him. From every other point, so great was the darkness of the night, no moving object could have been distinguished; but there, thrown out by the shining of the river, Morton, to his surprise, beheld the figure of a man running quickly down the hill in the direction of the park gates.

CHAPTER XLIV.

IMAGINATION is a great and wonderful endowment. By it the powers of conception are extended first from the actual to the probable, and then from the probable to the possible. Without it no great discovery probably would ever have been made, unless by the mere effect of accident; without it few of the fine or noble enterprises which checker the dull plodding of earth's ordinary course with spots of light would ever be undertaken; without it the brightness of everything that is fine and beautiful would fade away into the leaden grayness of hard reality. It is, in fact, the light of life; and as the material world without the rays which bring its loveliness to the sense of the eye could only be felt in its harsh outline, so to the world of the mind all that exists would lose its coloring and its splendor, and sink into mere stern tangible forms, but for imagination. Yet there may be too much light; there may be lights that dazzle, lights that deceive; and that portion which serves not to illustrate acts to blind. Thus with imagination, too; unless duly regulated, it operates but in rendering indistinct, confused, and uncertain the moral vision; sometimes deceiving, sometimes blinding the eye that is opened to too broad a glare. Such is the case most frequently and most fatally in regard to the expectations of ever-aspiring man. These are almost always exorbitant, and when indulged in, are full of fearful disappointments, leading not unfrequently to reckless folly, vice, and crime. By the natural transition of which we have spoken—from the actual to the probable, and from the probable to the possible, imagination gives us the power of conceiving not only all that is, but all that may be, and if we stopped there, no harm would ensue. On the contrary, however, vanity, desire, hope, and every human passion misleads us into confounding the various modes or forms of our own conceptions—leads us to imagine that that which is likely is sure, and that which is possible is likely. When we have discovered our mistake we will not admit that it originated in our own folly or our own fault—we do not blame ourselves for neglecting to put imagination under the guidance of judgment, and we are angry with fate because it won't conform to the schemes we have laid out, or with our fellow men because they have disappointed expectations which an unrestrained imagination led passion unreasonably to entertain.

Such was the case with the man Williams, as he stood upon the spot where Morton had left him after having refused his demand. He muttered curses, he framed a thousand fierce and rash plans, and he thought alone of avenging himself upon others for a disappointment which nothing but fancy had taught him to entertain. In the pocket-book which had fallen into his

possession he had discovered papers which he had immediately perceived must be very important to the owner. He had instantly fixed an imaginary value upon them, and had not entertained the slightest doubt of obtaining the sum that he desired. He had gone on in his own mind to employ that sum in the execution of schemes he had long entertained, of which some indications have been already given in the course of this tale. He had buoyed himself up with hopes, and delighted in prospects which were all founded on the vain supposition that Morton would immediately accede to his demand. Those hopes and prospects, it must be acknowledged, were in themselves criminal. It was no scheme of a calm and tranquil life—of honest industry and domestic peace—that he laid out before him; it was no expectation, even of a relief from labor, or of a mitigation from toil, that he entertained as a consequence of obtaining a large sum by not very honest means. It was a life of enterprise and exertion that he pictured to himself—of strife, and danger, and excitement as a rover of the seas. There were, it is true, to be moments of calm repose, hours of dalliance and passion, scenes of soft enjoyment and luxurious ease, interspersed with the fierce energy of a pirate's life. But the great object and end was freedom from all restraint, the active exercise of a strong and turbulent will, the constant stimulus of peril and adventure. It must be said—not exactly in his justification, for justification there is none, but in order to put the matter before the reader exactly as it presented itself to his mind—that as habit is as powerful over thought as over action, he did not at all consider the course he proposed to himself as criminal. He had in his ship, when in the Mediterranean, seen others following the same life, and he had worked himself up to believe that any individual who chose to run the risk had as much right to declare war against the whole human race as a king against a neighboring state. He acknowledged no morality in the restraints of society. Those which he voluntarily imposed upon himself he was willing to abide by; and made it a point of honor to do so; but those laws which he had no share in framing, and which others had constructed for the general security, he would not admit to be binding upon him in any degree. I pause upon this character and upon this train of reasoning, because, under their various modifications, they are much more common than is generally imagined; and I do not think it is too much to say that one half of the crimes and vices of the world are justified in the eyes of those who perpetrate them by some such misconception of the moral obligation of the social bond. The more I have looked into it, the more I have conversed with and examined the characters of the criminal and the vicious—and I have done so a great deal for the purpose of ascertaining whether they acted upon mere impulse, or were influenced by any principles, and what—I have always found cause to believe that, though passion has been the prompter, there has still been a delusion going on in the mind, and holding up a shield between themselves and conscience, whose shaft could not fail to touch their heart, if it were left naked and undefended by sophistry.

In the case of William, however, it was natural that, as the objects proposed were criminal, and the means of attaining them which, as the most easy and least perilous, he had first employed, were anything but honest and just, his disappointment should lead him to meditate still more dark and violent means of effecting the same purpose; and one of his first exclamations, after venting many a bitter imprecation, was "By —! I will have the money, one way or another! I will not be balked and kept here for months, or perhaps shut up in prison, for fear of striking a good stroke. I did not wish to stir up these people here, or to fish in troubled waters among these dull plodding shop-keeping people of England; but now they shall find what I can do;" and, with his eyes bent down in meditation, he turned away and walked towards the farther corner of the park, near which, as before described, a stile lead over the wall to a spot where some cottages had been built beyond. His step was quick and irregular, in accordance with the irritable impatience that he felt, and the rapid footfalls caught the ear of some persons actually within the wall of the park, for some one exclaimed as he came near "It must be he, though he's devilish quick back;" and at the same moment the speaker advanced to meet him, adding, "Is that you, Mr. Williams? have you got it?"

"No, not a farthing, Bill," answered Williams; "and hang me if I don't go home and burn them all: for he shan't have them now if he would give a thousand for them;" and he added a bitter oath.

"That's unlucky, upon my life," added Bill Maltby, "and you wanted to go as soon as possible, too. Couldn't you and he make a deal of it?"

"No, by —!" replied Williams; "he thinks to get them for nothing; but he'll find himself devilish much mistaken—go! to be sure I want to go!" he continued, pursuing in a rambling manner the subjects suggested by what his companion said: "but I'll make a sweep before I go, however; and once I'm at Portsmouth or Plymouth they may hunt long enough before they find me."

"Don't you think," inquired Bill Maltby, in a suggestive kind of manner, "that if you keep about this place long you may have Prior, or some more unpleasant customers still, down here looking after you? Prior has got some notions like a gentleman; but the greater part of these fellows are rough 'uns. I think if I were you I'd be off to-morrow morning."

"Not unless there's something to be done to-night," answered Williams, doggedly; "I will not go without the money I want—Besides," he added, after a moment's consideration, "there's no such hurry. He said he would give me till to-morrow night to consider of it; and I can keep him in play about the papers for two or three days more. But I'm resolved to have what I want, any way—Hark ye, Bill, was that Brown you were speaking to?"

"Yes," answered Bill Maltby; "he's a little in the wind, and wouldn't budge, though I told him it was you."

"All the better," answered Williams. "You

were talking to me the other day about a lot of things up at the hall. I've a great mind to try it to-night."

"We had better wait till it's daylight," said Bill Maltby, in a low tone; "then we could contrive to get the two women out of the way, and slip in without any breaking. I know quite well the room where it is all kept. We could hand it out of the window one to the other, and if we were caught it would make a difference, you know."

"I see no difference at all," replied Williams sharply.

"Oh, but it would at a trial," answered Bill Maltby. "It makes all the difference in life. If you break through a door and only take a silver spoon you're pretty sure to tighten your cravat; but if you slip in and take a thousand pounds you get off for a taste of Botany."

The fact is, that in vice, as in virtue—in baseness, as in excellence—there are numerous steps and grades. We go climbing or descending the ladder; and though the downward course is the most easy, yet we are still inclined to hesitate at the next step as we gain a nearer sight of those which are below. Bill Maltby had not yet reached the point of burglary, and he feared to put his foot upon that round. He would rather have had an intermediate step; but Williams had no such hesitation, and he replied "I think you're turning coward, Bill. Ay, and fool too. Are you not quite sure that if we tried it in the day-light we should be stopped in the middle of the work, and only get grabbed for our pains. If we get in to-night the matter's quite sure. We can lock up the women, and be off at once, so that we can be out of harm's way before any one knows anything about it."

"But suppose we shouldn't find a ship ready to sail!" said Maltby.

"Why, you don't suppose I'm going to freight a ship!" said Williams. "I'm not such a fool as that, I can tell you. A boat is the thing, and that can always be hired when one has money. Now, you say there's plenty of stuff here."

"Oh, ay," answered Bill Maltby, "to the tune of two or three thousand pounds, and a great deal of it in gold cups and such like, which could be easily packed."

"We'll beat it up altogether for that matter," answered Williams; "that's soon done. Two or three thousand pounds. That's worth fetching, Bill. Have you got a tool with you?"

"Nothing but a screw-driver," answered Bill Maltby, in a low and faltering voice; for though a share in the plunder tempted him strongly, and though a man ever ready for a scuffle, yet the idea of a new crime which would render the whole of the rest of life insecure, filled him with apprehensions that he could not banish.

"Give it to me," was Williams's only reply; and having received a large turn-screw, which Maltby drew out of his pocket, he ran his hand over it, feeling its thickness and its length, and murmuring to himself "I would rather it had been a crowbar; but this will do. Now, Bill," he said, "we had better set to work at once; but let us see how we must arrange. That fellow Brown is fit for nothing but hard work. You saw he had nearly spoiled the whole affair

with the beak. I'll take the cracking the darkens upon myself; then Tom shall come in to help me; and you, who are sharp and quick, shall keep a look-out."

"We shall all go snacks, of course!" said Bill Maltby, who did not like the idea of a smaller share of the plunder.

But Williams turned sharply upon him, replying "Of course! Do you fancy I'm not a man of honor!"

Alack and a-well-a-day, what a wonderful thing honor is! How it would astonish many a smart man about town to hear thieves and house-breakers talking of honor, which is so often on his own lips; and yet more than one of those men about town, if he were to look into his own heart, would find that at the very time he is most frequently using that sacred word he is continually violating its true sense more than even the scoundrels whom he fancies he despises. Violating it! ay, in a thousand ways—breaking his word—betraying his friend's confidence—ruining his peace—cheating him on the turf—or swindling him at the gaming-table. Would to heaven that, under the penalty of transportation and branding in the hand, no men were permitted to use the word honor but those who can prove that they possess it! for the great difference between the honor that is amongst thieves and the honor of men of fashion is, that the former is maintained towards their friends, the latter only to the eyes of the world. If it were more real, we should have fewer appeals to the pistol's mouth to prove that it exists, for that which is self-evident is never doubted.

To leave our homily, however, Bill Maltby was very well satisfied with Williams's arrangement, for the part therein assigned to himself was decidedly the least perilous, and the most profitable. He calculated that in case of resistance within the house, or discovery from without, he should be easily able to make his escape through the park, and that no proof would exist of his participation in the robbery. Thus he would have all the advantages and none of the risk; and, under this view of the case, he made no further objection to proceeding immediately to business. Accordingly, Williams and himself walked up to the corner, where Tom Brown had been left, and where he was found sound asleep with his back against the park wall. He was speedily roused, however, and a short conversation, in a low tone, ensued; in the course of which Brown showed that, with all his apparent dulness, he had occasionally a shrewd conception of the dangers and the probabilities of anything that was to be undertaken.

"No, no, Master Williams," he said; "wait a bit—wait a bit. It isn't nine o'clock yet, and Edmonds and the keepers are always on the look-out about the park till half past nine or ten. You'll be sure to have some of them upon you; but if you wait till after ten they'll be all snug and snoring. The women, too, will then have gone to bed, so you'll have no piping; and we can sit here under the wall for an hour quite well."

This argument was unanswerable; and taking up a position in which it was impossible for any one to see them without approaching very

close, these three very respectable visitors to the park sat down to while away the time till the hour approached for the execution of their scheme.

CHAPTER XLV.

Waiting is always a very unpleasant process. There are recorded instances of persons who have found expectation agreeable, but their internal frame-work must have been of a very peculiar construction; for, to the simple apprehension of at least two-thirds of the world, it must seem that if it be for pleasure that we are forced to wait, the delay must be very tedious; and if it be for pain, the anticipation must be excessively disagreeable. But the act of waiting for the execution of a dangerous and criminal scheme is apt to fill the projector thereof—at least, in many cases—with doubts, hesitations, and fears not very favorable to energetic operations. This, indeed, does not always obtain in every instance, but the effect is modified as usual by the character of the individual. Now, there were three men seated under the wall of Mallington Park, and of those three only one experienced the apprehensive hesitation to which we have referred. Williams was of too stern and determined a character to be susceptible of its influence, and he remained merely calculating the position of all the doors and windows in Mallington Hall, and endeavoring to settle in his own mind which would give him most easy ingress. Tom Brown was too dull and stolid to suffer imagination to trouble him at all upon such subjects, and he nodded drowsily from time to time, ready to set when it was necessary, but thinking little of the moment that was to come after. Bill Maltby, on the contrary, sat doubting and shrinking within himself, every instant feeling more unwillingness to go forward in the scheme; not from any sense of its criminality, but from those vague, but not less tremendous, phantoms of danger, punishment, and death, which, in the pauses of crime—when neither the spirit of adventure nor the excitement of action carries us through unthinking—come upon the heart of every man engaged in wicked deeds. He contemplated all the chances, he magnified all the dangers. A few minutes before, and he fancied he could secure his own escape, at all events; but now he thought he might very possibly be taken in running away from the spot if they should be interrupted; and then, again, he pictured by the power of fancy, his apprehension with a part of the plundered property in his possession in case they should be successful. Then came the images of a prison, a court, examination, trial, execution; the pinioning the arms—the solemn procession from the cell—the priestly exhortation—the fatal drop—the gaping multitude—the shivering touch of the cord—the choking agony—the death, and the wide awful misty hereafter! All that he had shut out from thought for years—all that he had neglected or despised—every rejected warning—every inducement to better things cast away—each awful point in the fate and future of the criminal—each anguish of the heart and of the body which follow like hell-hounds upon the

course of the guilty were all present to his mind, at once growing into fearful distinctness in the darkness and silence of the hour.

It was a warm September night, but he felt it cold, a shivering sensation crept down his back, and over his limbs, he felt his arms tremble as he rested them, with his hands upon his knees; he could scarce keep his teeth from chattering in his head. A terrible thing—a very terrible thing is the expectation of crime!

The wind set from the side of Mallington, and though it was so low as scarcely to stir the trees, it at length brought, sweetly sweeping over the stream, the soft and musical tones of the village clock as it struck ten. To the ear of Bill Maltby it sounded like the knell of death, it seemed like the tolling of a funeral bell—it made the blood curdle in his veins. But Williams instantly started up and shook Brown by the shoulder, saying in a low voice, "Now, there's ten, and that d—d moon's getting up, I can see by the light aloft there. Let us get to work. You, Tom, go round by the path up above over the hill, and meet us just behind the house. I'll go with Bill and plant him where he can see all around. Come along, Bill."

Whether he doubted his companion's resolution, and determined to keep his eye upon him on the way to their scene of operations, or whether his choosing to accompany the young man was the mere effect of chance, I cannot tell; but they walked on together, Bill Maltby not daring to show his want of firmness; and, certain it is, that Williams, as they went, addressed to him, in a whisper, many a word well calculated, to use one of his own terms, "To hearten him up." He did, indeed, recover in some degree from the effects of his imaginary terrors, as soon as he was once more in activity, but still his nerve was shaken, and ever and anon, as they hurried on, though the dark close walks of the wood, he started and looked round as if he fancied that some hand was stretched out to seize him, and when they emerged into the open part of the park where the moonlight was just beginning to lighten the scene, he gazed on with anxious fear, half convinced that he saw the forms of men amongst the bushes, or in the hollows of the ground. His demeanor had not passed without observation by his companion, who, though incapable of dread himself, had seen what it produced in other men too often not to recognize the indications thereof; and if Maltby had looked to Williams's face, and had been able, by the faint light of that hour, to distinguish its expression, he would have seen a scornful smile curling the corner of his stern lip at what he internally called his pitiful chicken-heartedness. The sailor made no observation, however; but, keeping as far as possible under the shadow of the trees till they were within about fifty yards of the house, he crossed over suddenly to a wide-spreading elm that stood out clear from the rest near the western angle of the building, and then stopping, pointed down to a spot beneath the branches, saying, "There! stand there; you can see pretty well all round but on the east. Keep your eyes busy and your ears too." He spoke slowly and low; and then added, fixing his eyes firmly upon his companion's face, "If a man quits his post, falls to give warning, or betrays

his comrades, we shoot him through the head; and if I should not be here to do it, there are friends of mine who will."

"On ray life and soul, Williams," said Maltby: "I will be as steady as a rock. Did I not first put you up to the thing?"

"Yes," answered Williams; "and then got poltroonish when it was to be done. Look to it—that's all. You shall have your full share of the booty; but if you finch you shall have lead instead of silver, by —!"

Thus saying he left him; and Maltby, with mingled shame and indignation—the last not in the least lessened by a knowledge that Williams's charge was just—remained gazing for a moment sullenly upon the ground. He then raised his eyes, and followed with them his companion towards the house, saw him joined by another man, and then marked the shadowy forms of both glide all along that side of the building, seeming to examine every window and door attentively. He himself carried his glance over the whole of that façade; but all was dark and sombre. No light from any casement told that there was waking life within; and except on the eastern side, where the moonlight showed the windows and even the joints of the rough stone, the whole edifice was buried in deep shadow.

Williams was long in making his selection of a point of attack, at least to the nervous anxiety of Bill Maltby it seemed so; and after having neglected for some time the task assigned to him, in watching his companion's movements, the sentinel began to gaze forth over the park. Suddenly, with a start, he heard a loud sound, as of some strong plank riven asunder; and, turning his eyes quickly towards the house, he could distinguish, though by no means clearly, the two men standing apparently closely together before one of the windows on the ground floor, near the north-eastern angle. The window shutters of that story were all external; and Maltby well understood that the operation of breaking in had begun; but the noise terrified and shook him; and he instantly once more cast a hasty glance over the park, as if that sound could have already wakened up servants and keepers. He looked first to the westward, where all was still, and nothing to be seen—not even a deer; but then he gazed to the south, in the direction of Edmonde's house, which was not to be described, however, being hidden, as before said, by the trees and undulations of the ground. Running his eye along towards the east, his heart began to beat and his limbs to shake, for he thought he saw two or three figures, a long way off, but advancing towards the hall; and raising his hand to his eyes he endeavored to clear them of all mist, fearful lest the terror that he felt might deceive him. Now, however, he beheld the same objects more distinctly; they were clearly men; and they were coming forward rapidly. At the same moment a shivering crash met his ear, as if one of the panes of the window had been broken; and after an instant's hesitation as to whether he should at once provide for his own safety, or warn his companions, shame prevailed. He saw that the men who were advancing were yet far from the spot. There was time to save all; and, darting across, he seized Williams's arm just as it was throwing up the sash of the window which had been

opened from within by thrusting a hand through the broken glass.

"There are people coming!" cried Maltby. "Run quick—there are people coming, I tell you!"

But Williams was in the fierceness of active exertion, and he replied, casting up the window, "I don't believe it—it's a lie—you are afraid, and fancy it. Run round, Tom, and look out."

But, ere the words were well uttered, the alarm bell of the hall began to ring; and, snatching up the turnscREW which had fallen down, Williams hurried to the angle and looked round. Tom Brown and Maltby were already many yards towards the wood, but the bolder ruffian stood and gazed forth for an instant ere he also took flight. Then muttering "It is true, by —!" he passed again into the shadow of the house, cut across the open space towards the trees, and was soon among the wood walks again. The alarm bell still rang out its angry peal as hard as the hands of the two frightened women in Mallington Hall could pull it, and the shouts with which the persons who were coming up sought to convey the comfortable tidings of their approach to the disconsolate damsels within, were also borne to the ear of Williams as he doubled and turned amidst the tortuous paths. Instead of flying in the same direction as his two comrades, who ran towards the common at the back of the park and Wenlock Wood, he made the best of his way to the river, and, as silently as possible, waded in, and then swam over. Passing quickly through the back lanes, he entered Mallington-street by a narrow alley, just above the surgeon's house, and then at a slow pace descended the hill towards the inn. Several persons were still moving about in the village, and one of the first whom Williams met was Mr. Soames, the constable. Nor did he fail to stop and talk with him for a moment or two in a calm and easy tone, saying that he was just going to get a dram before he went to bed. While they were still conversing they were joined by Mr. Crump, who, in a voice of some trepidation, informed the constable that he thought he heard the alarm bell of the hall ringing. He had been just undressing, with his high window open, and was startled by the sound; but he could not swear that it was the alarm bell, as the wind set the other way.

"D—n it! let us go and see," said Williams; and all three hurried down to the bridge and listened. All was now still, however; the bell had ceased its warning tones long before, for Mr. Crump had been somewhat long in getting on his clothes; and concluding that he had made a mistake, the constable and Williams returned, after waiting near the gates of the park for about five minutes. As they trod their way back, however, the clock struck eleven, and punctual Mrs. Pluckrose had closed her house for the night. Williams was not sorry that such was the case; for he had foreseen that if he entered the inn, to get the draught he had pretended to be seeking, his wet clothes might be more apparent than was agreeable; but he affected some disappointment, and, with an oath at the good landlady for her punctuality, he bade Soames good night, and walked up the hill.

While each had been the proceedings of that very respectable and interesting person Jack Williams, the three keepers, who, with Edmonds at their head, had been out later than usual, having extended their ramble on the other side of the park, where some depredations had been committed the night before, hurried up to the hall, attracted by the sound of the alarm-bell. As they advanced they clearly caught sight of a man's figure crossing towards the wood, and two of the men set off in pursuit as hard as they could run; but the course which Williams had followed deceived them, and it is only necessary to say that their hunt was vain. Edmonds, on the contrary, went straight up to the hall, and rang the door bell; but it was long ere the two terrified women would give him admission—first inquiring who he was from an upper window; and then afraid to come down lest there should be robbers in the house below. When he was permitted to enter, they both at once informed him, with all the loquacity of wonder and terror, that they had been roused by a loud noise from the lower story, and on looking out on the side whence the sounds seemed to proceed, had seen two men busily engaged in breaking into the house.

With few questions Edmonds proceeded to the spot, the women following at a respectful distance; and there he found the window broken and thrown up, the fastenings of the shutters forced off, and part even of the woodwork shivered. The park-keeper gazed at it, in silence, for a moment or two, and then returned, locking the door of that room, and of the passage beyond.

"They are gone for to-night, Mrs. Chalk," he said; "but I will leave one of the men with you when they come back; and for the future, do you see, I will sleep up at the hall myself, at least till the house is full of people again, which I hope will not be long first."

The resolution which he thus expressed seemed a very simple one, and such as might well have been expected from a man of his character; but it was the most fatal determination he could have formed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Is the reader have ever acted in the dignified situation of whipper-in to a pack of not very well disciplined fox-hounds, or performed the still more troublesome task of driving a herd of young pigs, he will have a faint idea of the difficulties which beset a romance writer who has many characters to deal with. Each and all may be absolutely necessary to the plot, each may have his particular function to perform, each may be required to bring about the grand result—but still they will run about in all manner of ways, get into all manner of places, and the unfortunate driver must hurry hither and thither to bring them into the right course at the proper moment. Now, on the day which succeeded the attempt upon Mallington Hall some five or six of our personages all require, unfortunately, our care and attention. There are Mrs. Charlton, Louisa, Mr. Morton, Mr. Gibbs, Harry Soames, and the Misses Martia; besides an episode concerning Mrs. Wind-

oor; but, as they were all assembled in the village, we could easily manage them; besides these, however, there are Jack Williams and his fraternity, Alfred Latimer and Lucy Edmonds, ay, and even Mr. Quatterly, to say nothing of Captain Tankerville; and as these ladies and gentlemen were scattered over the face of the earth at considerable distances from each other, we must take our old friend's seven-league boots, and hasten from place to place to deal with each separately.

At the distance of about two-and-twenty miles from Mallington, with a ridge of hills between the two places, which rendered the communication between them slow and infrequent, was a town containing some five thousand inhabitants and three distinct parishes and churches. It was a busy little bustling place, with a tolerable commerce and several manufactories; and the people minded their own business more and other people's less than was the case in Mallington, where each individual had very little business of his own to mind. In the parish of St. Stephen the Martyr, in this town it so happened that Edmonds, the park-keeper, had been born and married, and there, too, the year before he entered the service of the Earl of Mallington, had his daughter Lucy first seen the light. Her name, consequently, appeared in the parish register, which is a matter of some importance to this tale, or, at least, to this chapter. Alfred Latimer, it will be recollected, had neither been born in Mallington nor in the aforesaid parish of St. Stephen, but in the city of London; and it so happened that he knew his parish, which is what every man cannot say.

However that may be, as the parish of St. Stephen the Martyr, in the country town of which we have been speaking, extended a little way into the country, it contained in its outskirts many a pleasant little cottage; and one of these—the name of which, "Prospect Cottage," appeared in embossed letters on the front—was situated in a garden, and was the property of a gardener, who let his first-floor, furnished, to any ladies or gentlemen in want of a lodging. Why it was called Prospect Cottage is in some degree a mystery, for it commanded no other prospect than the top of the wall that surrounded it, the back of an old farm-house on the opposite side of the road, and a windmill with its appendages a little to the west. It was, indeed, in a very retired and unobtrusive situation, little to be seen itself and seeing little of anything or anybody.

In the front room on the first floor, which was neatly furnished as a sitting-room, sat Alfred Latimer with Lucy Edmonds. Poor Lucy was a good deal changed since the fatal period of quitting her father's house; she was thinner, paler, sadder; but perhaps the kind and character of her beauty was that which is increased by changes that affect detrimentally the loveliness that depends chiefly upon youth; and certainly it would have been difficult to find anything more interesting, more fair, more graceful than she looked as she sat before him to whom she had become a slave, and who had already too sadly shown her that he could become a tyrant.

She wept not—she had, indeed, given over

weeping, for she found that it irritated and annoyed him, and though it was often a terrible and bitter struggle to restrain the tears that were ever ready to burst forth, yet she had gained the mastery of them, and, with meek and patient endurance, strove to temper the bitterness of her fate. Sad she could not help being, for the voice of conscience was loud in her heart; but even her sadness provoked her betrayer, though he could find no excuse for anger, as she complied with his lightest word. He was her master, in short, and she resisted his will in nothing. Yet, with the perversity of his character, he was not pleased even with this placid obedience; he would fain have had matter for complaint, cause for quarrel. Not that he was already sated, and wished to cast off the unhappy girl whom he had so basely betrayed; for it would be a great mistake to confound the peculiar character of Alfred Latimer with the mere ordinary sensual debauchee. He loved Lucy, after his fashion, as much as he could love anything, and if he wished for cause of offence, it was not that he might have an excuse for parting with her, but solely that he might have an opportunity of tyrannizing and showing his power. She gave him no occasion, however, and his only resource was to torment her with hopes and fears about their marriage. It is true he wavered, and had wavered from the first, as to whether he would wed her or not. He had at first feared that by giving her such a tie upon him he might lose his slave, but as he saw more of her disposition he lost that apprehension; and the very bitterness and obstinacy of his character, as well as the promise that he had made to Williams, inclined him day by day more and more to keep his word. He had not forgotten the stern and severe language which poor Edmonds himself had used in speaking of his marriage with Lucy, and it seemed to him some sort of revenge to marry her in her parents' despite. He thought that he would make a great lady of her, that he would take her to Mallington in finery and splendor; but that as her father had said he would rather see her dead than his wife, she should hold no communication with her parents, but treat them as aliens for ever. Thus at his heart he had really determined to keep his word and marry her; but yet he could not refrain from leaving her in doubt upon the subject—from alarming her with affected hesitations—from reminding her that up to the last moment it was in his power to do as he pleased.

Though the banns had been published twice, and but a few days were to elapse ere they were to be published a third time, he had that very morning put her in mind that the publication was nothing, adding "You know, Lucy, we need not be married, after all, unless we like it."

Lucy's eyes were ready to run over, and her heart beat like that of a prisoner bird in the hand of one of the young tormentors of a school, but she conquered her emotion, and only replied, "Oh, Alfred, do not break my heart!"

"Why should it break your heart, silly girl?" asked Alfred Latimer. "What the better will you be for having a ring on your finger?"

Lucy shook her head sadly, as if she would have said, "I know that it can never make me

what I once was—that it can never give me back peace, or virtue, or repose of heart; but yet it will do much, and God's mercy must do the rest." She would not utter such thoughts aloud, however, for she now but too well knew that they were not fitted for the ear of him who sat beside her, and their further conference was interrupted by the landlady's daughter coming to say there was a gentleman below who desired admission.

Alfred Latimer's cheek grew hot, and he felt somewhat alarmed, for there is a consciousness of peril always present to the vicious, which makes anything sudden fearful to them. He asked several questions of the girl in regard to the appearance of the person who desired to see him, and then exclaimed "Well, d—n him! show him up, whoever he is;" and then, bidding Lucy go into the inner room, he threw himself back in an arm chair, watching the door.

What was his surprise, however, when he beheld Captain Tankerville enter, with a gay familiar air, as if they had parted the best friends upon the face of the earth.

"Ah, my dear Latimer, glad to see you! I found you out, you see. 'Pon my life a very pretty looking place. What a nice garden you've got—better than the Surrey side of the bridges, by half—and where's *madame*?"

Cool impudence is certainly a very wonderful thing, for although it cannot do everything, yet it can do a great deal more, and does do a great deal more, in all the affairs of life than any one suspects. Many a man of very moderate abilities rises to the first offices in church and state by its influence alone. Every class of successful men, but one, owes it a good deal in the progress towards power, wealth, or honor. It may be asked which is the one class we have excepted! It is the very small, narrow, circumscribed class of truly great men—the colossal statues of which the world has not room for many. Thus, dear reader, if you are not conscious of possessing transcendent powers of mind and perfect rectitude of purpose, and are not endowed by nature with that splendid quality, cool impudence, content yourself with mediocrity and go on plodding, for, depend upon it, your breath is too short to walk up hill.

Though almost all men are more or less impressible by the great gift of which we have just been talking, yet some are peculiarly so, and such was the case with Alfred Latimer. We have already hinted that a foolish sort of shyness had been one of the early causes of many another fault in his career, and shy men, except under very great and trying circumstances, which bring out the energies that are sometimes latent in their nature, are almost always very much overawed by impudence in others. Captain Tankerville, in the character of hully and bravo, Alfred Latimer had shown himself ready to meet, and competent to deal with; and had he appeared in the same humor on the present occasion the young gentleman would have kicked him down stairs without the least ceremony. But his cool, easy, pleasant impudence Mr. Latimer did not know how to manage at all. At first he looked grave and even stern; but it was irresistible. Captain Tankerville saw no coldness, noticed no frowns,

seemed to have forgotten all that had passed upon the common, all talk of horsewhips, all production of pistols, all reference to bullets and powder-flasks. It seemed as if every scene had been obliterated between the sponging-house and the cottage drawing-room where he then stood, and as if he were still Mr. Latimer's very good friend and boon companion. Although such sort of forgetfulness of things that we don't want to remember, has undoubtedly an infectious operation upon those who may not be quite so much inclined to forget, yet, as in the case of inoculation for small pox, the disease is generally produced in a milder form, and people do remember a little. Even Alfred Latimer did not become altogether placable at once, and inquiring what was Captain Tankerville's business with him, made some reference to certain disagreeable passages which had taken place ten or eleven days before.

"Come, come, Latimer," cried Captain Tankerville, with beautiful frankness, "don't let's talk any more of that. I behaved like a d-d fool, and am quite ready to admit it; but the truth is I was half mad for want of money, and when a man is in that state you know he will quarrel with his best friend."

Against such frankness what could Alfred Latimer do? From inexperience of the world he was somewhat gullible, and slightly so also by natural character; nevertheless, at the present moment, his own finances were beginning to get somewhat lower than he liked to see them, and he therefore answered "I can understand that," alluding to the propensity a man in want of money has to quarrel with his best friend—"I can understand that, for, to say the truth, Tankerville, I am somewhat short of cash myself, and shan't be sorry to hear that you have come back to pay me the fifty pounds again."

This was a way of putting the matter which Captain Tankerville was not altogether unprepared for, for he was a grand calculator of contingencies, and he had made himself thoroughly acquainted with every discoverable fact concerning Mr. Latimer's family, circumstances, and situation.

"Why, not exactly that, Latimer," he replied. "I've come to pay you back part, and part is better than none, you know. I can let you have twenty pounds, for I have just made a grand coup, and as soon as I got any of the dust I thought of you. Here's the money; but I can do better than that for you—if you'll just listen to a little advice of mine, and follow my guidance, I think I can put you in the way of setting yourself up completely; but then, you know, you must let me have a share of the advantage."

"Let us hear what the business is," said Alfred Latimer. "You shall have your share if it can be carried through, and I'd give a devil of a deal just now to be able to command a thousand pounds."

"You can get more than that if you manage right—ay, five times as much," was Captain Tankerville's answer; "now that I know you've courage enough for anything, the matter will be easily done, for it wants but one bold stroke, which in your case would be attended with no danger, to make your fortune completely."

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"Well, out with it," said Alfred Latimer; "I'm ready for anything that may do that. What is to be done?"

"Something I wonder you have not done long ago," answered Tankerville. "You know we had a talk some time ago about your sort of half sister, Miss Charlton—that is to say, your mother's second husband's daughter."

"That is not my half-sister, you know," exclaimed Alfred Latimer. "We are no more relatives than you and I are; but what next?"

"At all events she has a large fortune," said Captain Tankerville, and was going on, when his companion once more interrupted him with a shake of the head.

"That won't do—that won't do!" he said, "Her father took care of that—the old hound! He left the whole property away from her, if she married me—not a penny—not a rap would come of such a scheme, and besides—"

"I know all that," rejoined Tankerville. "I have heard the whole story; but my plan is a different one. You can drive your own bargain with any man who wants to marry her. If one won't pay down, another will."

"That won't do either," replied Alfred Latimer. "I have no power over her."

"But you may readily get it," said Tankerville, in a low voice.

"I might have got it at one time, if I had thought of it before," answered his companion, "but that chance is gone too, now. She is engaged, I am sure, to Morton, and with my mother's consent, too, or she would never have told him all her affairs."

"Do you know what this Morton is?" asked Captain Tankerville, less surprised by the intelligence than, perhaps, Alfred Latimer expected; "the people of Mallington do not seem to know anything about him."

"My mother thinks he is a poor painter," answered Latimer; "but I am sure he is not that."

"Are you sure he is not worse?" demanded Captain Tankerville; "there are strange suspicions about him in the village. I was talking only last night to a good lady of the name of Martin, who told me many doubts she had, and very reasonable doubts, too. Now listen to me, Latimer—you've a great regard for Louisa—have always been like brother and sister, and you've every right in the world to interfere, in order to prevent her marrying a man whom you have reason to think a swindler."

"But I've no reason to think any such thing," exclaimed Latimer; "quite the contrary. I think he's a man of fortune, and I'm sure of it. Ah! I see what you mean," he continued, observing a peculiar grin upon Captain Tankerville's countenance—"you would say I can pretend to think he's a swindler; but that would be no good, for he could prove the contrary in five minutes, and then I must hold my tongue, you know."

"Not if you will do as I would have you," said his companion. "You don't suppose I wish you to go to Mallington, and tell your mother and the old guardian—I forgot what is his name—that you think Mr. Morton not a proper marriage for Miss Charlton, that there are suspicions of his being a swindler, and all that. No, no, that would never do. You

must first get her into your power, into your own hands—then drive your bargain with him, and if there be any row about the matter, and it should go wrong, you've always got a good reason to give for what you have done. You can say it was all for the girl's good, that you had reason to believe that he was an impostor, that your mother and the old guardian were, for their own ends, furthering the trick, and that you had taken her away only to make her a ward in chancery. But there will be no row about the matter. He will come down with the dust fast enough when he finds you have got her in your own hands, and that there may be a great deal of difficulty in getting her out again."

"I don't think it," answered Alfred Latimer; "when I talked to him about my mother's making him pay for her consent, and showed him that it was well worth his while to do so, he replied, as proud as a peer, that he would never have any share in making Louisa's hand a matter of merchandise."

"Ay, that's another affair," replied the captain; "if he's such a high-spirited chap he'll be all the more likely to give five or six thousand pounds to get her out of your hands, especially if you keep it close where she is. He'll not call that a matter of merchandise. That will be merely setting her free."

"There's something in that," said Alfred Latimer, thoughtfully; "but I don't know how it is, I don't like to vex Louisa. She's a good kind girl as ever lived: and I shouldn't like her to think so bad of me as that I had made her unhappy just for the sake of some money."

"But you must tell her and everybody else the same story," rejoined Captain Tankerville, "internally laughed at the few remaining scruples in Alfred Latimer's heart. "You must make her think that you wish her nothing but good, and you can easily do so with her and everybody else too, for there are plenty of causes for believing this Mr. Morton to be a very doubtful sort of person."

Alfred Latimer shook his head, and laughed, answering, "You can't make me credit that."

"What will you think," said Captain Tankerville, after a momentary pause for consideration, "when I tell you that there are bills posted upon all the walls within ten miles round London, offering a reward of fifty pounds for the apprehension of a certain clerk, lately in the employment of Mr. Quatterly, solicitor, who has absconded with a large sum of money and is supposed to be concealed in the country under a false name! Now you may very well choose to believe that this Mr. Morton is that very clerk. You've seen them together. You know that Morton and Quatterly had money matters with each other, and there are many suspicious circumstances about this fellow's stay at Mallington. All this can be proved, and no one can say that you didn't believe the whole of it, so you are perfectly safe, if you choose to take Louisa from Mallington House to-morrow."

"It's not a bad scheme," answered Alfred Latimer, thoughtfully; "but how am I to get her away, that's the question!"

"That's easily done," answered Captain Tankerville. "I'll manage that for you, and I'll tell you how."

Just at that moment a slight noise, as if something light was falling, was heard in the next room; and Alfred Latimer, suddenly remembering the proximity of Lucy, held up his hand to Captain Tankerville, and then opening the door between the two chambers, looked in. Lucy was seated near the window, employing herself with some woman's work, and her scissors lay upon the floor beside her, as if they had fallen from her lap. Alfred Latimer closed the door again, but did not resume the conversation there.

"Come into the garden," he said. "We may be overheard here, and that wouldn't do;" and taking up their hats they walked down the stairs, and remained in conference for nearly an hour, walking up and down one of the broad gravel walks.

CHAPTER XLVII.

AFTER leaving Alfred Latimer, Captain Tankerville proceeded into the heart of the town, and out at the other side, walking along the high-road till he came to an old and not very respectable-looking house, which was, notwithstanding, the first in the place, in coming from London. There was a tall wooden post before the door, with a square iron frame at the top, in which had formerly swung a sign; but that sign had long given way to wind and weather, and the present occupant had contented himself with painting up in large letters over the door, "The King's Arms." To whatever king those arms might have belonged they had certainly dignified no very important public-house, for though over the door it was written that good beds might be found within, the lodging it afforded did not comprehend horses as well as man, and the accommodation even for the latter was of a very limited description. Entering the door, however, Captain Tankerville turned to the right, where was a small parlor, which had not known the beautifying touch of either painter's or whitewasher's brush for several generations. The brownish yellow color, too, which is acquired by age had been deepened and heightened by the fumes of many thousand tobacco pipes; and the odor of a narcotic weed, rendered somewhat flat and strong by its antiquity, still exhaled from the paneling and from every article of furniture which the place contained, saluting the nose of the traveler, and giving him warning that he had no escape from the flavor of old smoke but by producing new.

The room had but one tenant before Captain Tankerville appeared, and this was a man of about thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, who, in spite of being respectably dressed, had a look of misery about him difficult to describe. It was not alone that his well-cut and not very old coat had evidently not been brushed for several days, nor that the legs of his trousers displayed several spots of mud up the back; but it was the attitude in which he sat, and the expression of his countenance which gave one the idea of utter wretchedness—deep, internal, consuming.

There was a handful of fire in the grate, and he had drawn his chair to the side of it, resting

his right foot upon the fender. His fore arm lay negligently on his thigh, his head drooped till it was within a foot of his knee, his shoulders were drawn forward till they almost touched his ears, the form of the bladebones being apparent through the coat behind; and he gazed upon the small glimmering fire as it wavered and flickered before him with a dull and leaden eye in which there was no comfort. Never was there a picture of more complete dejection; and if it wanted aught to render it more striking, the finishing touch was given by the glass half full of gin-and-water, which stood upon the table beside him. He had drunk a part in the vain endeavor to raise his spirits, but even in the midst had plunged into the reverie of his sorrow, and forgotten to finish the draught. What was that sorrow? The worst that can afflict humanity—crime.

The door opened with a pulley and weight; and the moment he heard the clatter that it made, he started with a look of terror and turned round. In Captain Tankerville he recognized a tormentor, but not what he most dreaded—an officer; and with an impatient jerk of the shoulder, he betook him to gaze into the fire again, at the same time raising the glass with a nervous shaking of the hand, and drinking off the contents.

"Ah, Mr. Wilkins," said the worthy captain, as he entered, "still poring and pondering, and making yourself miserable. Pooh, man! don't be a fool. If you go on this way you will get caught to a dead certainty."

"Do not call me Wilkins," answered the man, in a piteous tone, "I told you that my name is Jones. What do you want now? You promised to go away, and not to come near me again."

"Ay, I intended to do so," replied Captain Tankerville; "but I am compelled to trouble you, as the tradesmen say, Mr. Wilkins—I mean Jones. A little occurrence has just taken place which makes it absolutely necessary that I should have two hundred pounds more."

"Two hundred pounds!" exclaimed the unhappy man, "where am I to get it?"

"That won't do, my good sir!" replied the captain, "I am up to all that. The sum you took off Quatterly's desk was eleven hundred pounds, and"—

"Hush, hush!" cried the culprit, for Tankerville had purposely raised his voice; "do not speak so loud. You know I gave you all the gold I had—one hundred and ninety pounds—and you said you would not take notes for fear they should be stopped."

"Well, they must do now, for want of better," answered the captain; "but I must have two hundred somehow, that's clear."

"And then you will come back and want more," rejoined the clerk, almost fiercely, "till you get the whole, and I shall be punished for your profit."

"Oh, no!" cried his tormentor, "that's a mistake. This is the last, positively; but it must be had, Mr. Wilkins, *alias* Jones. No, I can assure you that I am sorry for you, and don't wish to trouble you; nay, more, I'll put you upon a plan of getting safe out of the country as soon as you bring the money, and that's the most friendly act I can do you just now, I've a notion."

"Will you? will you?" cried the unhappy man, eagerly, "how is it—what's to be done?"

"Get the money first, and then I'll tell you," replied Captain Tankerville.

"But won't you cheat me?" replied the man; "after you've got the money, won't you cheat me?"

"See what it is to be a cheat!" said the worthy captain, in the true *Richard the Third* style. "He fancies every one as great a rogue as himself. No, no; I won't cheat you, upon my honor."

The fraudulent clerk did not certainly look quite satisfied, but went out of the room, with his head and eyes bent down, muttering to himself something in which nothing but the word "honor" was distinguishable. Captain Tankerville was not inclined to put more confidence in the clerk than the clerk was in Captain Tankerville, and it suddenly struck him that such a thing might occur to Mr. Wilkins as to get his money, walk out of the house, and convey himself away to some other place of concealment. To guard against this result the worthy captain walked out into the passage the moment after, and planted himself at the foot of the stairs. He received no interruption in his watch, but from the landlord, who inquired, "Are you pleased to want anything, sir?"

"A glass of brandy-and-water," replied the captain, who was always ready, "cold without;" and leaning his arm upon the bar, he chatted for a moment till Mr. Wilkins appeared coming down the stairs with his hand in his breeches pocket. The unfortunate man had never entertained the slightest idea of escaping from his persecutor; and giving Tankerville a sign to follow, he walked into the little parlor again. As soon as they had entered, he was drawing forth the notes, but his companion exclaimed, "Stop a bit, stop a bit, I've ordered some brandy-and-water. Wait till they bring it;" and in a minute after, a large rummer of black-looking stuff was brought in. When the landlord was gone, Wilkins immediately produced a bundle of notes, which he handed over to Captain Tankerville, exclaiming, "Now tell me, tell me what is to be done."

But Captain Tankerville had his particular taste as other men. He enjoyed the unhappy culprit's anxiety; it was a pleasant amusement to him—a relaxation from his more serious occupations. He therefore counted over the notes slowly, to see that the tale was correct, and then, looking up with a dry cold countenance as he put them into his pocket, he said, "Suppose I have nothing to tell."

"You're not such a villain," said the clerk.

"Why, you see, Mr. Wilkins, *alias* Jones," said Captain Tankerville, "it was not very fortunate for you, certainly, that just as you were getting down from the top of the coach you should stumble upon one who knew you so well; but if you ask my advice, now—the best thing you can do is to make your way as fast as you can to a seaport, and take your berth in a ship. That's the only way to get out of an island."

The poor man gazed upon him for a moment, with a look almost bewildered; but then a glance of rage came into his eyes, he lifted his head, threw back his shoulders, and rising from his seat strode towards the door.

"Hullo! what are you going to do?" exclaimed Captain Tankerville, somewhat disconcerted by these signs of an intention which he did not rightly comprehend.

"I'll tell you," said Wilkins, sternly, "I see what you're about. You intend to wring the last shilling out of me, and then inform against me for the reward; but I'll be beforehand with you, and what I am going to do is to call the landlord, give myself up to him, and accuse you as an accessory with the money upon you—I won't be tortured this way any longer;" and he stretched out his hand towards the lock of the door.

"Pooh, nonsense! I was only joking," cried Captain Tankerville, a good deal alarmed in his turn. "Come back—come back, and I'll tell you what to do."

He rose as he spoke; but Wilkins had by this time gained the courage and decision of despair; and he replied with a wave of the hand, "Sit where you are, and I'll stay here till you tell me, for I'll have no more joking when you've got my neck in a halter, and I've got your feet in Botany Bay."

Now, it is probable that Captain Tankerville, if he had not given twenty pounds of the stolen money to Alfred Latimer, might have ventured to call loudly for the landlord to have given Wilkins in charge, and to have pretended that he had only taken the sum which he had about him in order to prove the man's guilt; for Captain Tankerville was seized with one of his fits of rage at finding the worm turn upon him, and in those cases he was apt to forget everything—but his own safety. That, however, was a paramount consideration, and after about a minute's struggle with himself to conquer the strong devil within him, he said, "What a fool you are, not to see when a man is joking with you. Here have I not only been laying out a scheme for you, but actually got the means of carrying it into execution. Look here!" and he pulled out of his coat pocket a bundle of handbills—there might be a dozen or a dozen and a half—each of which contained a full, true, and particular account of Mr. Wilkins' personal appearance, and offered a reward for his apprehension.

"What has that to do with my escape?" said Wilkins fiercely, when he saw them.

"Everything," replied Captain Tankerville; "I bought these of a man who was sticking them up expressly for your sake. Now, what you have got to do is nothing but this—to go to a slopeller's, and buy yourself a flannel jacket and an apron, to get yourself a tin pot full of paste, and a paste brush, and walk away towards Portsmouth, or the nearest port you can find, sticking up a bill upon the wall, wherever you may think there are people looking after you. They are never likely to suspect a man who is seen placarding a reward for his own apprehension. It's a new go, that, my good fellow, and I think a devilish clever one;" and he laughed at his own cunning. "I'll tell you what I'd do besides," he continued, getting into the spirit of the thing—"I'd cut off a bit of that dark hair and those whiskers, buy myself a second-hand flaxen wig, and a low-crowned glazed hat. Then the devil himself wouldn't know you."

A ray of light, of the bright light of hope, shone in the culprit's eyes, and he said, "That will do—I do believe that would do. Well, this is kind of you, after all; but I don't know rightly which road to take."

"Oh, I'll tell you," answered Captain Tankerville; "you've nothing to do when you go out of the inn, but to walk along the London road for a mile, and just beyond the milestone you'll find it branch off to the right; that will lead you over the hills to Mallington."

"I can't go there, I can't go there," cried Wilkins; "that's where I was ordered to go the very morning I took the money."

"That's just the reason why you should go," answered Tankerville; "they'll never think to find you there. You might lodge there for a year without ever being found. It really makes me sick to see a fellow like you in such a fright. Why, I lived for eighteen months quite comfortably, in different parts of England, with all the beaks in London after me, without receiving one penny from any friend or relation upon earth, and yet I never wanted my little comforts. But do as I tell you, and all will go right. The first thing you do when you go into Mallington, stick up a bill against the wall of the great house at the top of the hill. Then plant another on the garden-wall of the Bagpipes Inn, down by the bridge; then you can take the coach that comes down at night, and get on to Winchester; plant a bill or two there, and get on to Southampton."

"I'll set about it directly," said Wilkins, raising his hand to the lock of the door; but then he paused, while his face became a shade paler, and he added, "You won't inform against me, after all!"

"Why, you fool, I should be cutting my own throat," replied Captain Tankerville. Should not I have to give up all I've got! Besides, I've another object in getting you safe out of the country. What it is, is no business of yours; but it will serve my purpose, and that is enough. So go along and buy the things, pack them up in a bundle, and change your clothes at the first common or wood you come to. I'll keep the landlord chatting here till you've done it all."

"I must get a five pound note changed," said Wilkins, remembering his assertion that he had given Captain Tankerville all the gold he had taken; but he had in truth no occasion to have recourse to such a proceeding, for the principal part of his booty had been a bag containing five hundred guineas. Neither did Captain Tankerville altogether believe him; but as he had means of getting the notes into circulation without appearing in the business himself, he suffered the matter to pass, and after remaining at the inn till Wilkins returned from making his purchases, he saw him pay his bill, and went with him a short distance on his road to Mallington.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALTHOUGH there is something comfortable to most men in any sort of wickedness on the part of others—a pleasant little self-gratulation, as well as the titillation of that very excitable propensity called wonder—yet the fact of a law-

yer's clerk having robbed his master was not a matter of so much horror and importance as to give great gratification to the general public of Mallington, when the very man who had committed the crime, dressed as a bill-sticker, placarded the walls with an advertisement of reward for his own apprehension. Had they known the trick, indeed, which was being played under their eyes, it might have made them more comfortable than it did; but as it was, though a great number of persons read the hand-bill, and got a little bit of marvel out of it, yet the great majority very soon forgot the affair, as they knew none of the parties concerned. There were two or three persons in Mallington, however, for whom it opened sources of enjoyment unknown to their fellow townsmen. Miss Mathilda Martin read the placard as she went down the hill; and although she was on the way to speak with Mrs. Splashman—the gay widow of a draper, who was looking forward to future matrimony—in regard to nine pair of silk stockings, for which Mrs. Splashman had never paid, yet she instantly turned back to the shop and communicated to her sister the important intelligence which she had thus obtained. As soon as she had told the story, Miss Mathilda shut her mouth, opened her eyes, elevated her eyebrows, and shook her head, with mystery as clearly written upon her countenance as ever it was upon that of a certain Babylonian lady of more than doubtful reputation.

The meaning of the look, however, was not hidden from Miss Martin herself. She translated it at once with the greatest facility, and although it contained a world of logical argumentation, which might have taken an inferior mind a length of time to follow and comprehend, she saw the inference at once, and replied without hesitation, "There can't be the slightest doubt of it. Now, Matty, it is but a public duty to go and call the attention of Soames to the subject. I wouldn't say anything direct; that isn't your business; but I'd just point out to him the bill, and then ask him if he does not think it very extraordinary that there should be such a likeness between this clerk Wilkins, and the person calling himself Morton. I'd have another look before I went, and get all the particulars."

"Oh! I've got them all as pat as the ten commandments," replied Miss Mathilda Martin. "'Five foot ten or eleven inches high, dark complexion, dark hair and whiskers, rather good-looking'—I don't think him good-looking, for my part, but there are others as do, so that's nothing—'generally dresses himself in black, and has somewhat of a military look'—there can't be a doubt of the man, I think."

"Not enough to puzzle a child," replied Miss Martin, "and when you put that and that together, and think of he's being down here and nobody knowing who he is, and his flashing his money about so smartly, and his walking out at nights, and all that, the thing is as clear as clarity."

"Well, I'll go directly," cried Mathilda, and was turning out of the shop upon her charitable errand, when her eye, being directed across the street, fell upon an object of interest. "Upon my life," she exclaimed, "there's that Mrs. Windsor. I've a great mind to call her and ask her a thing or two."

"Do, do," cried Miss Martin. "She's a despicable creature; but it will be good fun to see what she'll say."

The younger lady thereupon raised her voice, saying, "Mrs. Windsor! Ma'am! I wish to speak with you for a moment."

The housekeeper of Mallington House, thus adjured, crossed the street gravely, and entered the shop; and while she was performing this operation Miss Mathilda, with ready wit, laid out an excuse for calling her.

"Oh! Mrs. Windsor," she said, as soon as that lady came in, "I wanted to show you this beautiful piece of satin, which we've just had down from London. Isn't it a sweet thing!"

Mrs. Windsor was not in the least deceived in the world. She was a shrewd person, and knew the Misses Martin well. Casting a careless eye, then, over the piece of goods exposed to her gaze, she said dryly, "You know, ma'am, we don't deal at your shop—Is there anything else you wanted?"

"Oh dear, no," replied Miss Martin, for Mathilda was a good deal discomfited. "We only thought you might like to see it. We were talking of quite different things when my sister caught sight of you. She was just telling me of the bill that's posted up all about the place offering a reward for the apprehension of that gentleman."

"Yes, I saw it," replied Mrs. Windsor, "but as I know nothing about him, I went on and minded my own business."

"Pray, ma'am, is Mr. Morton at your house still?" asked Miss Mathilda abruptly, with a sort of hysterical titter.

"Oh, yes," answered Mrs. Windsor, not in the least discomposed; "and likely to be for some time. He's not looking for lodgings, ma'am."

"I didn't suppose he was," answered Miss Mathilda; "but since you take it so, Mrs. Windsor, I must say you've no right to think my sister and me uncivil for asking you to see a pretty thing; and as to your mistress not dealing here, we can't say we are sorry for it, for we like customers who pay, Mrs. Windsor."

"Oh, I didn't say I thought you uncivil," replied the housekeeper; "I only think you two very silly people. Good morning, ma'am," and she walked out of the shop, leaving the Misses Martin to vent their indignation for a few moments in such expressions as "Wretch," "Trull," "Despicable minx," &c.; after which the younger lady proceeded on her way, in a state of irritation which was likely to make her communication with the constable somewhat less discreet than was at first proposed. As she went down the street, however, to her great satisfaction, she found Mr. Soames himself, with his eyes raised up towards the wall, reading the important document, with Mr. Gibbs, the traveler, and one or two other persons standing beside him. Miss Martin suffered him to conclude, and then touching him with her delicate hand, she called his attention to herself, and begged to speak with him for a moment.

Mr. Soames walked aside with her somewhat unwillingly, for he knew Miss Martin to be a dangerous person, and one in whose hands anything that was said to her increased and multi-

plied and shot out branches in various directions with rapidity and fecundity truly astonishing. Miss Mathilda Martin, however, had the talent of insinuation, and she seldom began straight-forward; thus her first question was "Have you apprehended him?"

"Who do you mean?" asked Mr. Soames, in a rough tone, desirous of making her speak more plainly.

"Why, the gentleman, to be sure," replied Miss Mathilda Martin, looking shrewdly over her shoulder towards Mallington House.

"Do you mean the man that the bill is about?" asked the constable, pointing to the placard; and, as Mathilda nodded her head, he added, "How could I apprehend him when I've never seen him?"

"La!" cried Miss Mathilda. "Well, I never! I thought you must have seen him often enough. Five foot ten or eleven, dark hair and whiskers, rather good-looking, usually dressed in black—has somewhat of a military look!" Well, there's nobody so blind as those that won't see, and if people don't choose to use their eyes and understanding, I can't help it; but I know what, if I were a constable, I should look after those as are down here, with no business or calling, giving themselves great airs, and spending a great deal of money, when no one knows where it comes from."

As she said this, Miss Martin turned away, and the constable, beckoning Mr. Gibbs, walked up the village. "I'll tell you what, Mr. Gibbs," he said, "even such a foolish old maid as that Miss Martin has her suspicions."

"Oh, hang her!" said Gibbs, "she suspects everybody. I offered them the agency of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad for the town and district of Mallington, and they immediately——"

"Well, but," said Harry Soames, interrupting him, "you acknowledge yourself that you have seen strange things, and yet you won't say what they are."

"Because I can't help thinking there must be some mistake," answered Gibbs. "He's a perfect gentleman, and I've had papers of his in my hand which make me quite sure of it."

"That might be all a trick," answered Harry Soames. "How can you tell they were his papers? If he be this scamp of a clerk, as I think, it's just as likely that he has taken some of his master's papers as the money, and then he would be sure to use them just to cover who he really is. I've a devilish good mind to go and take him up, and bring him before a magistrate on suspicion, that I have!"

"You might get yourself into a mess," said Mr. Gibbs; "and I'd wait till I saw clearer, if I were you. It's a very doubtful case, Mr. Soames—a very doubtful case, indeed. It puzzles me quite; I don't know what to make of it."

"Well, if you would tell me all," rejoined Soames, "perhaps I might help you out with it. What I want to know is, what put you in such a flusteration, and made you look so knowing the day after they attempted to break into the hall. If I take this young fellow up, depend upon it I'll call you before the magistrates to give evidence; then you'll be obliged to speak, you know, so you might as well say your say at once."

Mr. Gibbs still hesitated, however, and even in the end would not give the required explanation, but urged Harry Soames only the more eagerly to mind what he was about, and to take care he didn't get into a scrape. The constable's curiosity was but the more excited by his reluctance, and he continued to press him in various ways as they walked up the hill. "I almost thought," said the constable, "at one time that you fancied this Mr. Morton had a hand in the job up there."

But Mr. Gibbs parried the point dexterously. "Oh, dear," he said, "how could I think that! Wasn't he down himself the next day with Doctor Western, looking all about the place where they had broken in, and advising Edmonds to sleep in the house, almost as if he was giving him orders?"

"That might be all a trick, too," answered Soames. "Your cunning fellows know how to push a face. Well, at all events, there's Wilkinson, Mrs. Charlton's servant, at the gate; and I shall just talk a word or two to him about this young chap. If I could but get up some story, I would go in and speak to the fellow myself. I'll answer for it I'd soon fish out something from it."

Mr. Gibbs shook his head, doubting very much Mr. Soames's power of fishing anything out of the pond of Mr. Morton's mind; but having a certain degree of curiosity about him, as the reader may have perceived, he was willing to help the constable in this part of his undertaking, and therefore suggested that Master Harry Soames might pretend to have something to say to Mr. Morton upon the subject of his lost pocket-book. This proved a very satisfactory hint to the constable, and walking on together, they approached the footman, who was standing at the gate which opened upon the high road, with his hands under the tails of his coat.

To Harry Soames's question, however, as to whether Mr. Morton was within, the man replied in the negative, saying that he had been out for an hour; and the constable proceeded, in a quiet conversational tone, to talk of that gentleman, and his affairs; to the course of which proceeding Mr. Wilkinson opposed no impediment, having his full share of footman qualities, amongst which neither the least, nor the least frequent, is that of chattering about that which does not concern one. The palaver which ensued would not be very interesting to the reader, if given in detail, but Mr. Soames and Mr. Gibbs gathered from their friend that the proceedings of Mr. Morton were matter of some wonder and speculation in the servants' hall—that he was often out very early in the morning, and often late at night; and that, moreover, everybody in the house but Mrs. Windsor wondered what their mistress could be about, and thought it very strange indeed that Mrs. Charlton should so evidently cast her step-daughter at the head of a man of whom she knew nothing.

"I can't help saying he's quite a gentleman, certainly," said Wilkinson, "and does everything quite in gentlemanly style; but if I were a mother, Mr. Soames—which, please God, I am not likely to be—I should like to hear who he is, and what he is, and all about him, before I made him my daughter's husband. Mrs

Winsor understands it all. I can see—Hang it, she understands everything. She's one of those still, quiet, peeping, cat-walking people who know every mouse-hole about a house; but she won't say a word, not she."

"Well, Mr. Wilkinson," said the constable, "I wish, when Mr. Morton comes home, you'd just contrive to step down and tell me, for I want to speak to him about this pocket-book of his. I think I could contrive to get it for him if I had a little more information."

The footman promised to follow these instructions, but that day passed and the next without Mr. Soames receiving any intimation that Morton had returned to Mallington House, and we must now turn to give some account of what had taken place within that mansion at an earlier hour of the same morning.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Amongst all the pleasant things of life—and the all-bountiful hand of Providence has scattered the path of our days with innumerable pleasant things if man would but enjoy them—amongst all the pleasant things of life there are few more pleasant than a walk in a flower-garden before breakfast on a sunshiny morning.

To see those mute and still, though not motionless creatures—I mean the blossoms—opening their painted bosoms to the beneficent rays which give them their color and their loveliness, welcoming the calm blessing of the light as if with gratitude, and seeking, in their tranquil state of being, for nothing but the good gifts of God, might well afford a monitory lesson—for everything in nature has its homily—to us, the eager hunters after factitious enjoyment—to us, goaded on by our own passions to seek for everything that the Almighty has denied. How calm do they stand in their loveliness—how placid in their limited fruition of the elements that nourish them—how in their splendid raiment do they sparkle in the sun—how do they drink up the cup of the dew, and gratefully give back honey and perfume in return! And there are some, though but too few, who, watching them as I have said in the morning light, can gather such lessons from their fair look, and feel their hearts lifted up to God even by the contemplation of a flower. One of those who could do so was Louisa Charlton, and it had always been her custom from her childhood, whenever the sun looked brightly into her window as she was dressing in a morning, to go down as soon as she was ready and walk for some time through the gardens round the house. They were large, well-arranged, and carefully tended, for they had been the pride of Mr. Charlton's heart, and he had loved to see his flowers the finest and his fruit the best that the country could produce. After his death Louisa took the chief care of them herself, for Mrs. Charlton did not much heed such things, and to the mind of the daughter the memory of her father was associated with every different flower-bed, and tree, and shrub.

It may well be supposed that Louisa did not give up the habit of early rising, or her morning walk, when she was sure of finding the most beloved society in her own dwelling, and gene-

rally was joined ere her ramble was concluded by the companion dearest to her heart. It must not be said, indeed, that after Morton's arrival at Mallington House she took as much heed of the flowers as she had previously done, for her thoughts were whiled away to other things, not less pleasant, and of deeper interest at the moment; but still her morning walk took place, and rarely was she once round the garden before her lover was by her side.

On the day of which we have been speaking in the last chapter—namely, that on which the inhabitants of Mallington, on rising from their beds, found the placard describing the absconded clerk, which had been posted up late the day before—Louisa Charlton entered the garden about a quarter before eight, with an air less calm and tranquil than usual. Instead of proceeding on her way from path to path, and parterre to parterre, at a quiet, orderly, sober pace with her eyes—whatever her heart might be doing—busily examining, or appearing to examine, the flowers, she came down the steps, with her light foot treading the ground eagerly, and her face turned alternately to every different part of the garden, evidently looking for some one in haste. At length some moving object beyond the second row of evergreens attracted her up the middle walk, and in less than a minute her hand was clasped in Morton's as he advanced to meet her.

"Oh, Edmond!" she exclaimed, "I am so glad I have found you. The butler said you had gone out; and, as you said last night that you had some engagement to-day respecting the pocket-book, I feared that you might be already away, and I should not have known how to act."

"What is the matter, dear girl?" asked Morton, with some feelings of apprehension. "You seem agitated. Has anything alarmed you?"

"No, I am not exactly alarmed," replied Louisa; "but a little annoyed by a note I have received this morning from Alfred. He says," she continued, holding an opened letter for her lover to take it and read—"he says I am not to tell any one, and especially not Mrs. Charlton or you; but I think that, as we are circumstanced"—and the blood rose slightly in her cheek as she alluded thus vaguely to her position with her lover—"I think, as we are circumstanced, I have no right to keep anything back from you, whoever may ask it. In this case especially I cannot do so, for how I shall act will depend entirely upon what you say."

Morton took the note gravely, for there was something in the very name of Alfred Latimer that conjured up thoughts of no very pleasant character, and read it through before he replied. The words he saw were to the following effect:—

"Dear Louisa,

"I am very awkwardly situated, and much want your advice and assistance. I cannot come into Mallington to see you; for reasons; but if you would just, like a kind, good girl, as you always are, walk out through the garden upon the common, and take your way towards the windmill, about half-past eight to-morrow, I will meet you there, and you can be back time enough for breakfast. It will be doing me a very great favor, indeed, if you come, and

mind, don't say a word to my mother, and although Morton's a very good fellow, you must not say anything to him.

"Your affectionate brother,

"ALFRED LATIMER.

"P. S. Mind, not a word to Morton, for the world."

Morton gave the letter back to Louisa, and then drew her arm through his, saying, in a decided but kindly tone, "You must not go, dear girl, on any account or consideration."

"I thought such would be your opinion," answered Miss Charlton; "and, indeed, after what I have vaguely heard of Alfred's late conduct, I felt no inclination to go; but, on the contrary, so much dread that nothing but your advice and request would have induced me to do as he asks."

"No chance of my giving such advice, Louisa," replied Morton. "Woe Latimer a mere wild, careless youth, who got himself into scrapes and difficulties by thoughtlessness, extravagance, or folly, I might have hesitated what to say; but as, on the contrary, he is habitually vicious and depraved—as he has shown no regard for honesty, honor, or even common decency—I must be harsh, Louisa, for the occasion requires it—as such is the character he has established for himself, I cannot but say it would be both improper and dangerous for you to meet him in the way he suggests. What may be his design or object I know not, but I doubt much that it is one at all honorable to himself, and if he retained any sense of what is right, or had any real regard for you, he would not make such a request as he has done."

"I do not argue quite so ill of him on that account, Edmond," answered Louisa, somewhat sadly; "you know that we have been brought up together as brother and sister, and he might not see—indeed, I am sure he did not see any impropriety in asking me to meet him on the common, if he wished, as I doubt not he does, to obtain some assistance from me or through my means. It is his conduct to others that has made me hesitate."

"And it is that conduct, dearest Louisa," replied Morton, "which renders it wrong in him to ask you to come. Conscious, as he must be, of acts committed in this very neighborhood of the most shameless description, his proposing to one so pure, so good as you, Louisa, to meet him at this early hour, is almost an outrage."

"And yet, Morton," replied his fair companion, "I would give much to be enabled to make one more effort to recall him to better things—to give him some present assistance in extricating him from his present situation, and to—to press him—"

Louisa paused and colored, for she was now approaching a subject that, to a mind like hers, was not only painful and agitating, but which roused feelings of shame even in speaking of it with one whom she loved and trusted. After a moment's hesitation, however, she went on.

"I would give much," she said, "to have an opportunity of pressing him to marry that poor girl Lucy. I have often seen her, Edmond, often spoke to her, and I am sure she was once modest, good, and virtuous. I cannot but think that some base means must have been used to render her otherwise, and I would fain urge Mr.

Latimer to remove that stain, at least, from his character."

Morton laid his hand upon the soft and fair one that rested on his arm, and pressed it gently. "Ever kind and noble!" he said. "I fear that it will be vain, Louisa, but yet such feelings and such wishes must not be thwarted. For you to meet him is impossible; but as this letter shows that he can be at no great distance, notwithstanding his having eluded all search, I will endeavor to find him out, and—"

"Oh, do not risk a quarrel with him," cried Louisa, "you know not how violent and impetuous he can be, and I much fear if you were to speak with him on the subject I have mentioned, he would become furious."

"I do not propose to do so, dear one," replied Morton; "my voice would have no effect. I have abandoned all hope of reclaiming him; but yet—and I do not think that it is love which makes me fancy so—I cannot but believe that your voice might have some effect. There is something in the pleading of a woman for a woman, in the virtuous and the high for the sinful and the fallen, which is very powerful; and when all his life must have taught him to love and respect you, perhaps there may be a chance of his yielding to better purposes when proposed by your lips. What I will then do, my Louisa, is to seek him out, to avoid all matter of discussion between him and myself, and to make some arrangement by which he may come here in safety—perhaps to-morrow morning, before Mrs. Charlton is up, and speak to you in private. You can then hear what he has to say, and shape your arguments accordingly."

Louisa hesitated ere she replied, for she could not banish all apprehension from her mind of some painful collision between her lover and Mrs. Charlton's son. Although she had not, it is true, as yet seen Morton placed in any very trying and difficult circumstances, yet, from those small traits which we read, without being aware of it, as indices of the characters of those by whom we are surrounded, she had been impressed with a full conviction that Morton was not without great command over himself, even when strongly moved. But, at the same time, she saw that his reprobation of Alfred Latimer's conduct, and his judgment of his disposition, was stern and severe—more so, indeed, than seemed quite consistent with the general tone of kindness and charity which all his conversation displayed. Had Louisa, indeed, either possessed Morton's experience of the world, or the full knowledge which he had acquired of Alfred Latimer's habits, she would not have wondered at the little hope he entertained of his reformation, or at the fixed opinion which he had conceived of the natural badness of his heart. As it was, however, she feared that his feelings would display themselves somewhat too openly in any conference with Latimer; and that the latter would give way to some burst of violent passion such as she had seen him frequently indulge, which might lead to an open quarrel between them. Before, then, she suffered her lover to leave her upon the errand on which he was about to set out, she sought to take securities from him in the shape of many promises that nothing should induce him to suffer Mrs. Charlton's son to irritate or make him angry.

Morton tranquillized her upon that point, assuring her that her fears were without cause, and then left her to proceed upon his way, having received an intimation, that if he would come to a spot named, some communication would be made to him in regard to the lost pocket-book which might prove more satisfactory than the last.

Taking his way out of the gate farthest from the house, Morton directed his steps towards the point assigned, which was marked by a red-painted finger-post upon the common, about two miles and a half from Mallington House, where several of the small roads, which traversed the wide extent of moor in different directions, crossed each other. He had no very distinct notion of the locality, for he had never hitherto had occasion to visit that side of the common. The attentive reader, indeed, would probably be able to find his way to it blindfold, when he is told that the post stood about three hundred yards to the south of the lone house to which Prior, the Bow-street officer, had been conducted some time before by Bill Malby. As Mr. Morton, however, had not heard anything but the result of Prior's expedition, and was totally ignorant of the particulars, it is not to be wondered at that, though taking the general direction in which he was told that the post was to be met with, he wandered somewhat out of the way. Thus bearing to the eastward of the direct line, at the distance of about a mile from Mallington House, he came in sight of the mill which had been mentioned in Alfred Latimer's letter, and he naturally turned his eyes in that direction. At a little distance from the mill he perceived a man pacing up and down the road, and though he could not be nearer than half a mile, he had no difficulty in recognizing the person of Mrs. Charlton's son by his peculiar gait and walk. As it was not his intention to encounter him at that moment, and he did not like to have the appearance of spying upon him, Morton turned off to the right, and, passing over the brow of one of the numerous waves of ground, descended into a hollow filled with gorse and heath, through the midst of which wound the little narrow path he was following. That path soon led him over another slope, from which he caught sight once more of the top of the windmill, with its sails whirling rapidly in the quick fresh breeze, and in a minute or two after he descended into a still more profound hollow, which, like a great furrow formed by some gigantic plough, extended straight across the moor for nearly a mile. On the left, in the direction of the mill, which was now no longer visible to Morton's eyes, and at the distance of about three-quarters of a mile from the path which he was pursuing, the highway crossed the dell, and, looking along the hollow vista in that direction, the top and body of a post-chaise as far down as the axles of the wheels, with the heads and shoulders of three or four men gathered together in a group, were apparent. The chaise was motionless; the men did not stir; and Morton thought the whole circumstance somewhat odd and suspicious. Calculating as nearly as he could, he judged that the spot where the vehicle was placed must be about a quarter of a mile from the mill, and upon considering the undulations of the ground, he became convinced that neither the chaise itself, nor the people who

accompanied it, could be visible from the spot where Alfred Latimer was waiting for Louisa Charlton. Indeed, if the common there was as irregular in its surface as at the spot where he then stood, the carriage would be hidden from any one coming from the side of Mallington, till he was close upon it.

A quick suspicion passed through his mind; but Morton was not fond of suspicion, and although he knew that it was difficult to do Alfred Latimer injustice in such circumstances, he mentally said, "No; he could never be such a scoundrel!" but the moment after, he added, "At all events, I am very glad that Louisa has no thought of going."

Twice or thrice as he passed over the opposite slope, he turned his eyes towards the chaise, and still saw the same group at the same spot. Just when he reached the top, he perceived the figure he had seen waiting near the mill, coming along the road above towards the party below, and apparently beckoning to one or more of them. Satisfied, however, that Louisa was in safety, Morton did not wait to watch their proceedings, but walked on, and the minute after they were hidden from his sight.

As he went on he got a better and more general view of the country round, though without catching sight of the chaise again, and perceiving that he must have gone too far to the eastward, he took the first path to the right, which soon led him to a small sandy carriage-road, and at the end of about half a mile farther he perceived the red post to which he had been directed, standing before him, with part of the lone house which Prior had visited appearing above some trees beyond. No person was seen upon the road, however, and Morton, thinking that by one circumstance or another he might have been delayed beyond the appointed time, took out his watch to ascertain the hour. He had yet ten minutes to spare, and walking on to the finger-post, he sauntered up and down before it, but still no one appeared. Nor, indeed, had it ever been the intention of the person who called him there either to come or send, the appointment being made, as the reader may have divined, from Williams's words on a former occasion, merely for the purpose of keeping Mr. Morton in play. That gentleman at length began to suspect that such might be the case, and was about to turn upon his way homeward, when the sound of carriage wheels suddenly met his ear, coming on apparently at a rapid rate, but then stopping in a moment.

CHAPTER L.

THE plan was all laid out, the preparations made, half a dozen lies were ready to be told as soon as any circumstance might require them, the post-chaise was concealed in the hollow, and, besides two or three of Alfred Latimer's usual companions, Captain Tankerville, dressed in a suit of black, to look as like a physician as possible, stood by the vehicle, to give authority to the tale which had been devised. The post-boy had been brought from a house at which Alfred Latimer knew his mother never stopped in traveling through the neighborhood, and he had been told that the object of all this care and

plotting was to catch a poor maniac who was in the habit of wandering upon the common, and who was to be confined in an asylum under a medical certificate. The same tale was to be spread wherever any questions were asked; and the document authorizing restraint to be used, had been manufactured by Captain Tankerville, who was an adept in concocting false papers to suit his purposes. He would not at all have scrupled to forge a name to the certificate, had he thought it necessary; but he judged that his own name, with M. D. appended to it, would be sufficient in the country, especially when he was present himself. Everything also had been prepared at the cottage inhabited by Alfred Latimer: a room had been furnished with nailed windows and iron bars; and the landlord had received intimation that it was the intention of his tenant to bring thither for a short time a near relation of his own, who was, unhappily, insane. The good gardener took the story upon trust, and, indeed, was not very particular who were his guests, so that his lodgings were well let; and Latimer, never doubting that Louisa would come at his invitation, thought Tankerville a very clever fellow for devising such a plan.

"I do not see," he said, "why I should not get a part of the money, as well as my mother, if Louisa is to be set up to auction," and he proceeded to calculate how many pleasant things he could do with five or six thousand pounds.

He was early at the spot appointed, and when Morton passed had been waiting nearly an hour, though the time he himself had fixed had not long gone by. As he was watching with eager and impatient eyes for Louisa's coming, he caught sight of Morton, though that gentleman was not exactly upon the road by which he expected her to appear. At first he did not recognize him, and merely gave way to a burst of impatience, from the apprehension of any stranger being near at the very moment when he was about to execute his scheme. In a moment or two, however, there was something in the air and figure which showed him who it was; the firm and vigorous step, the upright and commanding carriage left not a doubt; and, on the first impulse, Alfred Latimer would have hurried behind the mill to hide himself, had he given way to it. The next instant, however, he thought "She has told him, I'll bet a guinea; and he's coming here to watch what we are about. He had better mind his own business, or he'll get half his bones broken. Perhaps she has sent him to palaver me about virtue and propriety, and all that, and to offer me money if I'll be a good boy;" and he laughed scornfully, adding, "Hang me if I get out of his way."

Thus saying, he recommenced his walk again, up and down the road, at a little distance from the mill; but he very soon perceived that, whatever was Morton's object in coming to the common at all, he had no intention of approaching the spot where he had stationed himself. His next conclusion was that he had come to watch and to find out his designs, and the consciousness of his own villainous purpose made him fancy it already in part discovered. "Curse it!" he exclaimed. "If he goes on in that direction, he will see the chaise and all the people, and that will be a fine affair. Perhaps

he may have other fellows to help him, sent round behind by the lanes and the bank, and then we shall be in a net. I had better go and talk to Tankerville about it;" and off he set as hard as he could go, beckoning to his companions as soon as he got upon the brow of the hill behind which the chaise was concealed, and calling them to come to him, in order that the post-boy might not overhear their consultations.

The first who approached was Captain Tankerville, and Alfred Latimer was in full career, communicating to him his doubts and suspicions in regard to Morton; when Bill Maltby joined them. The latter caught enough of what was said to perceive the fears which the young gentleman entertained of being surprised, and he hastened to relieve him, saying "Pooh! nonsense, sir. I know quite well he was going across the common at this time. I told you so a couple of hours ago, but only you were in such a fluster you didn't listen."

"What is he after, then?" asked Alfred Latimer, turning quickly towards him. "What business has he up here at this time?"

The question somewhat puzzled Bill Maltby, for though he had willingly enough agreed to take part in Alfred Latimer's present enterprise, and had himself found a boy to carry the note to Miss Charlton, he was not at all disposed to trust that gentleman with any knowledge of the schemes and adventures in which he and Williams had been engaged.

"What he's about is no great matter," replied Maltby, at length. "He's gone upon a fool's errand, and will have to cool his heels for an hour at the red post, by Gandy's old house, waiting for 'the man that never comes.' The truth is, he's been making a great fuss about this pocket-book of his, and had down Prior from London about it; so a party of us young fellows determined that we'd have a bit of fun out of it, and make the gentleman walk the country."

"If that's the case," said Captain Tankerville, "you had better go back, Latimer. But it must be a good deal past the hour. I shouldn't wonder if she didn't come."

"If she doesn't," replied Latimer, "that d—d fellow has stopped her."

"Why, I can't help saying he's very right," replied Tankerville, laughing; "and yet we might make him pay for it, too."

"I wish we could," replied Alfred Latimer. "I am sure he has stopped her, if she is stopped, for she would only show the letter to him; and I'd give a guinea to see his head broke for his pains."

"Perhaps we can do better than that," replied Captain Tankerville; "but do you run up again, Latimer, and see if the girl's coming. I'll think of another plan in the mean time; for it is not easy to find me unprovided."

His companion returned to watch by the mill, and Tankerville held a brief conversation with Bill Maltby, for whose talents and acquirements, although they had been but lately introduced to each other, he began to entertain considerable respect. To detail all they said to each other, even in the short space of ten minutes, and to explain all that what they said implied, would take a good deal of room, for they spoke quick and sketched out their words with nods and signs.

We must therefore content ourselves with such scraps and bits of sentences as met the ear of an inferior companion, young Blackmore, the gardener's son, who had been engaged by Maltby to assist that morning, but was not admitted to the full confidence of the superior vagabonds with whom he was confederated.

"Oh, no," answered Maltby to a question from Captain Tankerville, "he knows nothing of me, though I know him."

"Well, then, if we can't have the doe, we must take the buck," replied Tankerville. Then followed some murmuring, at the end of which the worthy captain observed in a louder tone, "Oh, no! I heard all. He did not say whether it was a man or a woman—not a word of it. He only said a maniac."

"But I do not see the use of it," said Maltby. "What can you do with him?"

"I've not settled all," replied Captain Tankerville, in a tone of philosophic meditation. "One can never quite foresee all the results of anything; but one must be a great fool if one cannot find some way of turning them to advantage. At all events, my good sir, at sea, when we want to catch a fish we often bait a hook with a bit of another; and, if this sweet young lady is so much in love as Latimer says, we shall find means of driving a bargain with her when we have got her lover safe in our hands. It seems to me that it does not much matter which we have, so that we have one of them."

"Well, you had better be quick," rejoined Maltby, "for I dare say he will not wait very long, and, besides, he'll show fight you may be sure, and then if there should be any one near we may get into a mess."

"You run up and call back Latimer," replied Tankerville, "and in the meanwhile I will instruct this young fellow—what is his name?"

"John Blackmore," answered the other, in a whisper; "he's a determined little devil, though he looks spooney and lackadaisical," and having given this excellent character to his friend, he set off to recall Alfred Latimer to a new scene of operations.

On his return a brief but earnest conference was held by the four respectable persons engaged in this very praiseworthy enterprise, and though Latimer, when he rejoined his companions, bore one of those dark fierce looks upon his countenance which from boyhood had followed even the slightest disappointment, he soon was seen to smile with a bitter sort of satisfaction at what Tankerville proposed regarding Morton; for your thorough scoundrel is incapable of gratitude, and, transmuted by the dark alchemy of his own heart, benefits conferred upon him become injuries. There was something in the whole scheme that he liked—it had its portion of imagination and enterprise, and, as to scruples, Alfred Latimer had long done with them.

With him, then, the whole business was soon settled; and it was only necessary to notify to the post-boy the change of their plan, as far as it behoved him to know it.

"You must drive us round by this road, and then take the second to the right till I tell you to stop," said Latimer. The man touched his hat, and the young gentleman added, "The

poor man we are looking for has gone across the common."

"Ay, sir, I see him go just over there five minutes ago," answered the post-boy. "I should not wonder if he were to dodge you uncommon."

Without entering into any discussion on that point, Latimer, Tankerville, and Maltby got into the chaise, John Blackmore mounted the splinter bar, and round they drove till they came within about a couple of hundred yards of the spot where Morton was waiting; and then, leaving the chaise, while John Blackmore, instructed what he was to say, advanced along the road to engage the object of their scheme in conversation, the other three crept through the shrubs and tall furze towards the same spot.

The gardener's son came up with Mr. Morton just as he was about to turn towards Maltington, and, addressing him with an easy air, he said "I beg pardon for keeping you so long, sir; but there were people with a chaise dodging about, and I did not know what they might be after."

"Then you have come to speak about the return of my pocket book?" replied Morton.

"I hope to accept the offer I made, for this will be the last opportunity you will have of doing so."

"Cannot we split the difference, sir?" said young Blackmore, advancing closer to Morton, as if to whisper. "I think, now, you ought to consider, and if you do not you must."

Thus saying he threw himself upon him; but Morton, stepping back, with one straightforward blow levelled him with the ground. The youth, however, cast his arms round his opponent's feet and legs as he fell, and in an instant the three other men were upon their prey. The struggle that ensued was firm but brief, for Morton's chief effort was to draw a pistol from his coat-pocket, having taken the precaution of arming himself before he set out upon an expedition which might not be without its peril; but the attack upon him was so sudden that his arms were speedily pinioned; and as soon as he found the attempt to reach the weapon vain, he ceased to resist, merely saying, as his eye rested upon Mrs. Charlton's son, "I know not what are your designs, sir; but you had better consider well what you are about, before you plunge into crimes as well as vices."

Alfred Latimer made no reply but by a triumphant laugh, and they hurried their captive on towards the chaise. As soon as the post-boy was within hearing, however, Morton exclaimed, "Are you, my man, too, an accessory to this act of violence?"

"Ah, poor gentleman, I know all about it!" answered the man; and before Captain Tankerville could stop him, he added, "You're not the first madman I've druv."

"Ha! is that the story?" exclaimed Morton; "then let me tell you, you are cheated; and if you do not inform the nearest magistrate of all you have seen, you will certainly suffer for your part in this affair. I shall know you and your master;" and he read aloud the same upon the door of the chaise.

While this was taking place those who had

him in their hands had forced him forward as speedily as possible, but Morton resisted till he had said what he thought necessary, and then quietly entered the vehicle. Captain Tankerville and Alfred Latimer took their seats on either side of him, Maltby got upon the splinter bar, and young Blackmore, having received a whispered message from the latter, and some money from Mr. Latimer, hurried away across the common.

CHAPTER LI.

It took about three hours and a half for the chaise to carry Morton and his captors from Mallington Common to the house in the garden, and as the reader has been already informed, the road crossed through as uncultivated a district as any in the two counties. After quitting the common, indeed, it traversed several little hamlets, but no large village, and then, gradually ascending, it ran along the ridge of a bare hilly spine, used principally as a sheep walk by the neighboring farmers. At the other end, again, it entered into a more fully inhabited tract. A gentleman's house was to be seen here and there rising on the side of a hill, which gave a pleasant prospect, while groves of trees sheltered the mansion from the prevailing winds; and one or two small villages echoed to the sound of the wheels, as the chaise whirled through them, but as the road was now almost all the way down-hill, the post-boy kept his horses at a good pace, and it was not till they were within about a mile and a half of the town that any pause took place. It was by this time half-past twelve—an unpleasant hour for any one to bring a cargo of contraband merchandise through the marketplace of a large town—and, consequently, Alfred Latimer put his head out of the front window, and directed the post-boy to drive round by the lanes, adding something about “the poor gentleman making a row.”

Morton merely smiled; and though he saw a man coming along the road when the postilion drew up to hear what was said, he made no movement of any kind, being one of those calm but no less determined people who only take advantage of the proper opportunity more resolutely, because they have waited for it with patience. His perfect quietness and tranquillity, indeed, was not altogether pleasant, either to Alfred Latimer or to Captain Tankerville. They could not account for it themselves upon any other reason than that he had a perfect certainty in his own mind of speedy deliverance, by some process which they could not divine; and they began to entertain those vague apprehensions of dangers, against which there is no guarding, but which are very unpleasant to men engaged in a criminal pursuit. It would have been much more satisfactory, too, if he had striven and resisted, and made noise enough to have attracted the attention of the post-boy, which might, they thought, have confirmed the tale of his insanity they had thought fit to tell; but Morton disappointed them entirely, and the man having received his orders, drove round the town, through the lanes, and reached the cottage in the garden, the wall of which had in

it, besides the ordinary door, a gate for the gardener's carts to enter and go forth, as occasion might require. At this gate Maltby jumped down, and drew back the bolt, giving admission to the vehicle, which instantly rolled on close up to the door of the house. He then planted himself on one of the steps, and Alfred Latimer sprang to the other, to prevent the captive of their bow and spear from holding any communication with the master of the house, who was seen at a little distance working in his garden with one of his laborers. Morton, however, alighted quite quietly, as if going straight into the house; but he turned suddenly to the post-boy, who was looking round, exclaiming, “Remember what I told you! You will be well rewarded if you do—punished if you do not!” and then walked on, followed by Tankerville and Latimer, while Maltby remained at the door to watch the proceedings of the driver.

As soon as Mr. Morton was safely deposited in the room which had been prepared for Louisa Charlton, and the door locked and bolted upon him, the two principal scoundrels who had brought him thither, held a quick and whispered consultation in the passage, in regard to what was to be done with the post-boy.

“By —, he's devilish like to go and tell a magistrate,” said Alfred Latimer; “the fellow will say to himself there can be no harm in that, whether the man is mad or not.”

“Ay, that's what our friend upstairs calculated upon,” rejoined the worthy captain; “and there's but one way of mending it, that I see.”

“And what's that?” demanded Mr. Latimer.

“I don't see how we can stop it.”

“Why, give him a five pound note for his trouble,” answered Tankerville; “then if he keeps the money he's art and part in the business and won't dare to say a word; and if he says a word he'll be obliged to give up the money, which, depend upon it, he won't like to do.”

Alfred Latimer did not at all approve of lessening his little stock by the sum of five pounds; but, nevertheless, he saw no chance of concealment except in following the course which his confederate suggested; and consequently, after some grumbling, he advanced to the door of the house, paid for the horses, and gave the post-boy the sum determined upon, saying, “That's for your own trouble. You need not mind anything that fellow said about telling magistrates. He's as mad as a March hare, and we've got a doctor's order for what we do. Here it is.”

The man only thanked him, and drove out of the gate again; but, as he went, he exchanged a glance with the good gardener; and raising his right thumb towards the left ear of the off horse, seemed to indicate a desire that the man should follow whither he was about to go. As Maltby had turned round to speak a few words with his two companions, this gesticulation escaped the notice of all but the person for whom it was intended; and the gardener advancing to shut the gates, looked out, and nodded his head, as if to signify that he understood, and would follow.

In the meantime the three respectable gentlemen who had been engaged in this pleasant affair, proceeded to the drawing-room of the cottage, where poor Lucy Edmonds was speed-

ily dislodged, to give freedom to their consultation. As soon as she was gone, and the door shut, Tankerville said, alapping Latimer on the shoulder, "Now, my boy, at him at once. You have got the game in your own hands, if you play it well."

"But let us consider what I'm to say," rejoined Alfred Latimer. "The first thing I shall have will be a lecture upon being ungrateful, and all that."

"Oh, don't stand any nonsense of that kind," answered Tankerville. "Treat it as a matter of business, Latimer. Tell him you know quite well he prevented Miss Charlton from coming, and so he must stand in her place. Just say to him that if he has a mind to give you a promise in writing to lay down five thousand pounds to you on his marriage with Louisa, and to give his word of honor that he will not mention anything about this affair to any one, you'll let him out at once; but if he doesn't, you'll keep him in till you settle the matter with Louisa herself."

"He'll refuse to a certainty," replied Alfred Latimer; "I know him better than you do, and he's as stiff as a rusty weathercock."

"Well, it can't be helped if he is," answered Tankerville. "Curse him! let him refuse, and we'll settle the matter with the young lady. It's always a devil of a deal easier to plough with the heifer. We must get her promise for the five thousand—I'll manage all that and hang me if I don't try to make it ten. The devil of it is, we must be quick, otherwise you see inquiries will be made, and the whole business may get blown, which would be devilish awkward. However, we are sure enough of three or four days, and I'll take upon myself to answer for bringing the young lady round in that time. You go and speak to him, Latimer; and Mr. Maltby and I will wait at the door to make sure he doesn't break your head and get out, for he's devilish strong when he likes it."

Alfred Latimer, according to this suggestion, moved upstairs, followed by his two worthy comrades, to the room in which Morton had been placed. At the door, however, he paused for an instant; for though every day, in the course of vice which he was pursuing, he was undergoing that process of hardening which gradually converts the first sheepish dabbler in reguery into the brazen-faced villain, yet when his blood was not up there was a degree of shame left in his nature sufficient to make him feel unwilling to go in and display to an honorable and gentlemanly man the whole meanness and baseness of his character. He did not choose, however, to shrink or hesitate before his two more impudent companions; and, after this momentary pause to consider what tone he should assume, he threw open the door sharply, and went in, with his brow knit into a frown.

Morton was standing at the window, looking out; but he turned round instantly, catching sight before the door was closed, not only of Alfred Latimer himself, but of his two companions. His visitor, however, determined to take the first word; and, without giving Morton time to speak, he said, with a swagger, "I can tell you what, sir, people who think that they can thwart me when I've determined on a thing, and choose to meddle with what does not concern them, will find that they may get into the

wrong box. You may say what you like, but I know quite well that Louisa was fool enough to show you the letter I wrote her, and that you told her not to come; and now you taste the consequences of your interfering."

Morton gazed at him with a grave look of pity, not unmingled with contempt, "I do not understand," he replied, "what you mean by telling me that I may say what I like. I am not accustomed, sir, to say anything but that which is true, and you have had no occasion to suppose so."

"Well, did you, or did you not, tell her not to come?" exclaimed Alfred Latimer, eager to find grounds of quarrel.

"I undoubtedly did," replied Morton, "and I am very glad!"

"Well, then, you see what comes of it," cried Latimer, interrupting him.

"I do," replied Mr. Morton, "and, as I was going to say, when you stopped me, I am exceedingly glad that my opinion of your character and your conduct was so strongly formed, that I advised her not to trust herself with you at a distance from home, even before I knew you would venture to such a length as to gather together three or four ruffians and swindlers, with a post-chaise, upon the common, in order to carry her away to a room freshly prepared, with iron bars to the windows, for her imprisonment under some pretence or another."

Latimer had twice opened his lips to interrupt Morton while he spoke; but, to say truth, he was puzzled for a reply, and rage did not facilitate his utterance.

"I have every right," he exclaimed at length, "to take any means I may think fit to prevent my sister from marrying a fortune-hunter and a swindler."

Morton smiled, but answered calmly, "You have no right, sir, to interfere even in the slightest degree. Fortunately for herself, and for all who have any regard for her, you are not any relation whatever to the lady whom you presume to call your sister. Her guardians and her step-mother will, doubtless, take good care that she does not, as you say, marry either a fortune-hunter or a swindler; and if it is to me you apply those terms, there is nobody that should know better than yourself that you are falsifying the truth, and attempting to cover a piece of knavery by a lie."

Had Tankerville or any other of his companions ventured to use such expressions, Alfred Latimer's first act would have been to knock him down, but there was something in Morton which cowed him; and, after hesitating for an instant, he replied, "I did not say you were a fortune-hunter or a swindler; but I do say I've a right to know who you are, and what you are, before you marry Louisa Charlton, who, if she is not my sister, is just as good, being my mother's step-daughter."

"You have no right at all," replied Morton. "To those who have a right to inquire, I am not only quite ready to explain, but have explained already."

"The devil you have!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer. "Then, I suppose you mean to say you've made your bargain with my mother and old Doctor Western!"

"I've made no bargain with any one,"

answered Morton; "nor shall I make one—that you may be quite sure. I told you so when you hinted something of the same kind in London, and I repeat it now. You mistake me altogether; and I cannot but hope and believe that you equally mistake your mother's character in attributing such objects to her."

"Pooh, nonsense!" replied Alfred Latimer. "My mother would be a fool if, when old Charlton put such power in her hands, she did not make the most of it. What did the old man do it for, if he did not intend her to gain something by it?"

"It was very strange, certainly," answered Morton, thoughtfully, "and unlike the whole of the rest of Mr. Charlton's conduct. There is no accounting, however, for old men's caprices; but it is my belief that the law will not sustain that part of the will."

"The deuce it is!" exclaimed Latimer; "then the more need I should take care of myself; and I've only one word to say upon the subject, Mr. Morton, which is this—that if you or Louisa, one, or the other of you, do not agree to pay me down five thousand pounds upon your marriage-day; and if you do not give me your word of honor that no notice shall be taken of this affair; you will have to kick your heels here for a month or two, for I have got you snug, and you'll not get out in a hurry."

"In regard to my taking notice of your present conduct," replied Morton, "probably I shall not punish you as you deserve; not on your account, but on Miss Charlton's: in regard to her conduct to you, or to what she may think fit to promise you, I have no control, and do not seek to exercise any; but for my own part, as I said before, I enter into no bargain with you or any one else, and allow me to say that, by attempting to make such, you only degrade yourself without in the slightest degree forwarding your own object."

Alfred Latimer set his teeth hard, and then replied, "I'll tell you what, sir—I've got the whip hand of you, for a time at least—and I'll make you forward my object, whether you like it or not, so good morning to you," and thus saying he flung out of the room, and joined his two companions on the outside.

"Well done, Latimer!" said the gallant captain, grasping him by the arm. "We heard it all, every word, and nobody could do it better. You'll be as good as the Bravo of Venice in time. But come, let us consult on the next step," and, going down to the room below, Captain Tankerville continued (for, although he proposed to consult, he had already laid out the whole plan in his own head) "You must make me your ambassador to this fair queen of beauty and wealth," he said. "I will go over early to-morrow and represent the case to her, and I doubt not that before dinner time I shall bring you over her promise under hand and seal. Those dear creatures, the women, they are so easily humbugged, especially where a lover is in the case. Then they are always inclined to do things with an air; and but set them riding upon the hobby of generosity, and there's no knowing how far they will go."

"It's not so with all women," answered Alfred Latimer, thinking of his mother.

"Wouldn't it be better for you, captain, to go over at once?" asked Bill Maltby. "It's a good long way, it's true, but yet it's better to strike while the iron's hot."

"No, no," replied Captain Tankerville; "give her a day to fret. They'll not be able to trace him very easily—don't be afraid; and what between trying to find him out all this morning, and fretting and fancying he's murdered all night, she'll be brought down so low by to-morrow that she'll be ready to do anything that one wants, merely for the assurance that he's alive and well."

"That's Louisa, all over," answered Alfred Latimer. "I don't a bit doubt that she'll promise; but I'll tell you how you can make it quite sure, Tankerville. If you just make her think that Morton wishes it, she'll do it in a minute."

"Not a bad idea," answered Captain Tankerville; "we might write a letter for him, asking her to do it; but then you see, when she found out that that was all a fudge, she might not be inclined to keep her part of the bargain."

"Oh, yes, she would," replied Latimer, who at least understood Louisa's character well. "She never broke her word in her life."

"It will be better not to put anything on paper," said Maltby. "Captain Tankerville can just quietly hint that Mr. Morton wishes it; but wouldn't for the world ask her, and she would do it all the sooner, depend upon it. But you see, the mischief of it is, that while we are all over here, we can none of us tell what may be going on at Mallington, and a thousand things may happen to make it devilish awkward for us when we come to operations to-morrow."

This very sage observation struck his companions amazingly, and produced a discussion as to the steps to be taken, which ended by Maltby setting out for the purpose of hiring a horse and gig to proceed to Mallington, and watch all that took place in that village. A fresh call was made upon Alfred Latimer's purse for this part of the service, and Maltby promised to give due intimation of any occurrence that might be important in the eyes of his two companions.

After he was gone Captain Tankerville coolly invited himself to dine and spend the evening with his dear acquaintance of the sponging-house; and poor Lucy Edmonds was forced to endure during the rest of the day the presence and society of a man whose countenance and manners filled her with instinctive dread if not for herself, at least, for the unhappy young man towards whom she still entertained but too deep an attachment. After dinner, Latimer and his companion both drank deep, and Lucy was glad enough to quit them, and retire nominally to rest, though but little rest, indeed, could the unhappy girl find from the wearisome agitation of her own reproachful heart. The drinking still went on in the room that she left, and then cards were produced to pass away the time, for Captain Tankerville could not resist the temptation to pigeon even a confederate in crime; and Alfred Latimer, who really did play well—it was his only talent—fancied that he played better than any one else. For several games success was pretty equal on both

sides; and though Latimer did not wish to risk money, as the whole of the twenty pounds he had received from Captain Tankerville had been well nigh dissipated in the operations of that morning, the stakes were gradually increased till they amounted to a considerable sum, when fortune's balance began immediately to incline in favor of Captain Tankerville. With a heated brow and a glittering eye Latimer went on; but he still lost, and began to fancy he was cheated. The pile of money grew up on Tankerville's side of the table, and diminished upon his till he saw immediate need stare him in the face. Yet he could not stop, but went on watching the game with fierce eagerness, and thinking that he saw a card kept back, or slipped beneath when the pack was cut. He was in hopes at the very next deal of detecting the fraud, when the bell of the house

was heard to ring. The door was not opened, however, and with scarcely a minute's interval the bell rang again.

"The old fellow below is asleep," said Tankerville. "I should not wonder if it is some one from Mallington. I'll go and see," but before he did so he swept up his winnings, and put them in his pocket. Then taking the candle, he walked down stairs.

Alfred Latimer listened, and heard the voice of John Blackmore, the gardener's son; then looked with a haggard eye at the small sum that remained upon the table—less than ten pounds; but that was all that he now possessed on earth; and the next moment, as he was taking it up, Tankerville and the messenger entered the room, with an expression of a good deal of anxiety in the countenance of the former.



THE STEP-MOTHER.

PART II.

CHAPTER LII.

Just at the turning of the lane which took an elbow before it entered the high road at about a hundred yards from the first entrance of the town, the post-boy stopped his horses; for we must now go back to the worthy gentleman in white corduroys, top-boots, and a red jacket, who had driven Alfred Latimer and his friends to and from the neighborhood of Mallington. We do not propose, indeed, to stop long with him, and trust not to meet with him often beyond the limits of this chapter. Not, indeed, that the genus post-boy is altogether an uninteresting genus; and as it is likely soon to become utterly extinct, we might devote a whole chapter to the development of its specific characteristics, did not the exigencies of this story require us to hurry on. There are many varieties, indeed, of post-boy: the loquacious, the taciturn, the observing, the stolid, the drunken, the grave, the smart, the slow, the impassible, the picturesque, and the poetical; but still we will not be led into a disquisition, and merely say, that of all these varieties, the post-boy in question belonged to the observing class. A mind naturally astute, rendered quicker by a considerable quantity of drubbing in infancy and boyhood, the habit of lounging about inn doors and examining all sorts of things that passed, the necessity of driving multitudes of people whom he did not know, and of gathering from various little traits in their looks and demeanor whether they would give threepence, fourpence, or fivepence a mile, and the custom of riding and tending every devil of a horse that his master chose to purchase, which begot great acuteness in discovering the peculiarities of equine character;—all these rendered him of an observing and inquiring disposition, and enabled him to judge rapidly of everything that he saw.

Having stopped his horses, then, which were somewhat hot, and very tired, he got out of the saddle, patted his bearer on the chest, just below the near shoulder; drove some flies from the off horse, who had a thin skin, and did not like to be troubled; and then turned round and looked behind him to see if Alfred Latimer's landlord was coming. He had to wait several minutes before the expected event took place; but then the worthy gardenor made his appearance, plodding up the lane, and, after a significant glance between him and the post-boy, the conversation began as follows:—

"This is a run go, Master Wilson," said the man of horses.

"Ay; I don't half know what to make of it," rejoined the man of flowers.

"Do you know much about that young chap as is lodging with you?" asked the post-boy.

"No; I know nothing at all," replied the gardenor. "except that he pays his rent every week. That's my business, and I never mind anything else."

"That's a hint," said the post-boy, "that I had better mind my business, too;—but I can't help thinking, Master Wilson, that that 'ere young gentleman they've got hold on is no more inad nor you or I."

"Can't say," replied the gardenor dryly; "never see him before."

"Did you hear what he said to me?" inquired the other.

"No; I heard him say something, but I didn't hear what it was," answered the gardenor. "The truth is, I don't want to meddle with what doesn't concern me, and so"—

"As you get your rent, and I dare say it's a good one," rejoined he of the post-chaise with a grin, "you'd rather that your lodger wasn't disturbed in his doings. Well, it's no concern of mine either; so I'll jog on, and have a pot of beer;" and thereupon he put his foot in the stirrup, got into the saddle, and trotted away till he reached the inn.

The post-boy was now left to his own resources, cut off from the counsel which he expected to find in the gardenor, and much doubting what he ought to do. The five-pound note which he had in his breeches pocket, had a snug and comfortable feeling about it, which it would have been unpleasant to part with. When a man puts on a great coat in the morning, he feels cold if he pulls it off again the same day; and it is wonderful what a warm thing a five-pound note is in a pocket that has never had such a thing in it before. The thought of the deprivation was unpleasant to the post-boy, and yet, strange to say, the very fact of his having received that five pound note caused the greatest doubt as to whether he should keep it. He knew that it had not been given him for nothing; and he had to consider that, if any disagreeable consequences arose from the detention of the gentleman reported to be insane, he was sure to be looked upon as art and part in the transaction, in consequence of his having received so large a sum without honest services performed therefor. He did not like that prospect at all. Jail, and examination, and trial, and perhaps punishment, were very unpleasant prospects to him, and, besides all this, he was at heart not at all an ill-disposed or dishonest person. He had, at bottom, that which almost every Englishman naturally possesses, from the highest-minded man of honor to the lowest scamp—a great dislike to injustice in the abstract; and he had, moreover, that which all Englishmen habitually receive—an abhorrence of any infringement of civil liberty. He thought it a very hard case indeed that an English gentleman should be kidnapped and carried off, and shut up as a madman, when he was not mad at all; and of the latter fact, in Mr. Morton's case, he had no doubt.

But then the five-pound note in his pocket felt so comfortable; and the devil, who is always at every man's elbow, ready to take advantage of

any little circumstance in his fate to lead him away from the straight path with the most persuasive arguments, kept pointing out to him how many nice things he could buy, and how many pleasant things he could do, with the sum of one hundred shillings. Upon a close calculation he found that, under any ordinary circumstances, he would have to trot four hundred miles in a posting saddle, with the polo of the chaise rubbing his leg the whole of the way, and to walk his horses back a similar distance, disencumbered of the polo aforesaid, before he could, in the course of his professional avocations, make a sum equal to the five pounds in his pocket. Honesty and prudence required him to resign it: the devil and convenience said, keep it snug; and, between them all, poor human nature was in a sad puzzle.

The internal emotions of the man will have in some way their external impression. Centuries elapse without bountiful nature producing two such frames as that of Prince Talleyrand, in whom it is recorded that no emotions were ever perceptible, or, in other words, that the soul never looked out of window. Not so with our poor post-boy, who displayed the embarrassment in which he was by various visible signs. He rubbed down his horses ten times more than was needful—he more than once broke out into an agitated whistle in the midst of his brushing. The ostler asked him where the deuce he had been so long, and he answered, "Yes—very;" and when he came to give the landlord the money for the horses, he had well nigh given him the five-pound note into the bargain. Still he could settle the matter in no degree to his satisfaction. He wished the devil wouldn't tempt him, but the devil would; and the bundles of hay were so equally divided, that, like the ass in the fable, he could move on neither the one side nor the other, so completely was his mind on the balance.

At length something occurred to relieve him. A gentleman's chariot drove up to the door of the inn, and a loud voice shouted up the yard, "Horses on!"

Now the inn possessed three pair of posters, and at that particular time but two post-boys—little crooked-legged Jemmy, whose right leg had somehow been bent into the form of a semi-circle, apparently by the pole, and whom the reader who has traveled that road doubtless recollects being laid up with a severe fit of illness. The ostler called aloud, "Tom! Tom!—horses on!"

"Where's Bill?" cried Tom, which was our friend's Christian name.

"Gone to Winkington," answered the ostler. "Quick, Tom; the gemman's in a hurry, and you must go."

Now Tom, as the reader knows, had ridden forty-two miles that day, and he might be well pleased with a little repose, especially as he had had no time to get his dinner, and his stomach felt egregiously empty; but, on the other hand, he recollected that his new ride would give him time for deliberation, and also a good excuse, in case of need, for not proceeding to a magistrate's, in accordance with the injunction of Mr. Morton. He therefore only requested to have a pint of beer and some bread and cheese to take with him—the one in his stomach, and the other

in the pocket of his jacket—and carrying his great coat over his arm, he issued forth to the inn door, where the ostler was already busy in putting to the horses. The first thing he saw, on giving a glance in at the carriage-window, was an immense head, which had apparently seen many summers; but the expression of the countenance thereunto appertaining he could not well discover, for, in addition to the impediment of a pair of spectacles, the eyes were cast down, busily reading what seemed to be a law paper. The landlord was making out the ticket, but Tom, with a view to further discoveries, thought fit to approach the window and inquire, "Where to, sir?"

The gentleman looked up, and replied, "To Mallington. How far is it?"

"One-and-twenty miles good, sir," replied Tom, in a desponding tone, as if he thought he should never get there that night.

His dolorous expression seemed to strike the gentleman, and he replied, "I hope the man in the moon has not come down too soon to find his way to Norwich, for I should like very much to be in Mallington before eight."

Tom promised to do his best, received the ticket, got into the saddle, and drove away, still cogitating upon what he was to do. The journey, however, passed over quietly enough. The horses were fresh—a great deal fresher than Tom—but he himself was moved by that sort of irritating doubt which is a great incentive to locomotion; and so he kept his beasts going at a good rate, till, a little after night-fall, they entered the town of Mallington, and drove up to the door of the Bagpipes. Mrs. Pluckrose was out in a minute, the ostler made his appearance, the chamber-maid was seen in the background, and two or three heads raised themselves over the blinds of the tap and the commercial room, looking out to gather as much as the darkness would permit of the appearance and proportions of the vehicle. In the meantime Mr. Quatterly entered the inn, and was ushered upstairs; the horses were taken off, and delivered over to the tenderness of the ostler; and Tom, the post-boy, thinking he had earned a right to a little repose, went into the tap, soaked himself with his whip in his hand, and called for a pint of beer to begin with. While the bar-maid was drawing it for him, he suddenly heard the voice of Mrs. Pluckrose replying to her new guest on the first landing, "I'll send the note immediately, sir; but I'm afraid it's no use, for Mr. Morton, as I hear, went out early this morning, from Mallington House, and hasn't yet returned, and they are all in a great fuss about him. There have been people out all over the country looking for him; but when last I heard he had not been found."

What Mr. Quatterly replied Tom did not hear, but the speech of the landlady made a deep impression upon him, and on the impulse of the moment he exclaimed aloud, without noticing the presence of a slang-looking, tolerably well-dressed young man, who was flirting with the bar-maid through the window, "Hang me if that isn't the gentleman they are talking of as I drove over this morning. I'll go and tell them all about it;" and up he got, with his whip still in his hand, and approached the foot of the stairs.

"No," said Mr. Quatterly, speaking to Mrs. Pluckrose, still at the first landing, "I think I'll go myself, ma'am, and inquire into this business. Let me have somebody to show me the way." But just at that moment Tom approached, touching his hat, and saying—

"I think I can tell you more about it nor any one, sir, for I knows more nor any one."

"Come up, then—come up," said Mr. Quatterly, quickly, advancing to the room towards which Mrs. Pluckrose had been leading him. "Though this business seems as dark as mutton-pie, we'll soon have some light in it."

The moment after, Tom, Mrs. Pluckrose, and Mr. Quatterly were all shut in together in consultation, and at the end of about five minutes the voice of the fair landlady was heard calling from above, "Betsy! Betsy! Send the boy down to Dr. Western to say we've heard where Mr. Morton is gone to, and beg him to step up directly. Tell the ostler to get out a chaise directly—make the boy run all the way."

The slang-looking gentleman, of whom we have spoken, had looked a little askance at the post-boy's first announcement of his knowledge of Mr. Morton's abode, and for a minute or two paused in his conversation with the barmaid to listen to what was taking place above. He lingered about, however, saying a few words to while away the time, till the voice of Mrs. Pluckrose was heard giving the above orders; but then, without more ado, he walked out of the inn, and hurried down through a lane at the back of the street till he reached a small public house, which we may say, by the way, bore not the very best reputation in Mallington. He there found seated our respectable friends Bill Maltby and Mr. Williams, to whom he communicated, in great haste, all that had just taken place at the inn.

"Get out the horse, like the devil!" was Maltby's first exclamation; and as soon as the lad had run to perform this errand, he and Williams held a short whispered consultation, at the end of which a piece of paper was procured, on which the latter gentleman wrote a few hasty lines. In a minute after the youth returned, saying the horse was out. The note was intrusted to him; and he received directions to "ride like hell!" which, as we all know that that place gets on very fast, as well as all who are traveling thither—we may naturally conclude meant as quick as he could go.

The youth departed; and in a moment after the sound of a horse's feet were heard beating the ground at full speed.

CHAPTER LIII.

As may well be supposed, the news which reached Captain Tankerville and Alfred Latimer, to the effect that their whole proceedings were made known, and that magistrates and lawyers were in pursuit of them, proved by no means palatable to those worthy gentlemen; and while the captain interrogated young Blackmore with much acumen, drawing from him a full statement of all he had seen and heard at Mallington, his companion gazed on the note, which was addressed to himself, and seemed to find therein matter for no very light medita-

tion. After about five minutes' conference, however, Captain Tankerville made up his mind as to his own course.

"Well, Latimer," he said, "I don't know what you intend to do; but I'm off. I don't intend to be taken in my form, I can tell you; so, good night."

Latimer looked at him with a stern and haggard eye, but for a moment made no answer. At length, however, a smile of scorn, somewhat strained and unnatural, came upon his face; and he said, "you are easily frightened, Tankerville, and, I dare say, will be afraid to come back and give me my revenge when these fellows are gone. You have left me but a hundred pounds in the house; and you ought to give me my revenge at least—if your heart does not fail you."

He spoke an untruth when he pretended to possess the sum he stated, for his stock was reduced to a few guineas; but it was not without an object, as he well knew the only sure bait he could hold out to the swindler before him was money.

Captain Tankerville rose at it like a hungry trout. "Oh, dear, no!" he said—"I'll not balk you. I'll come back as soon as I find the coast clear; but I doubt, my friend, that if you stay, you'll get nabbed, for what we have done is no joke."

"I can get bail, if I want it," replied his companion, in a cool tone; "but as you cannot, I fancy, you had better go. I shall expect you to breakfast at ten, and I'll bet you five pounds that I keep my man in spite of them."

"Done!" answered Captain Tankerville; and, with a renewed promise to return and give him his revenge, as men term the process by which they propose to plunder a dupe still further, he took his departure, and left Latimer and young Blackmore together.

As soon as he was gone, the note was examined once more with keen attention, and then Mr. Latimer inquired, "how will Williams get over, John?"

"Why, he has got a gig, sir, all ready," replied the gardener's son. "He has been showing himself a good deal in Mallington lately, just to prove to the folks that he had nothing to do with cracking the window at the hall; but he always keeps a gig ready, nevertheless; and if he tells you in the note that he's coming, he'll be over quick enough, for Jack Williams does not lose time. He did not say anything to me about it, however."

"Then you had better go where you were told," answered the young gentleman. "I cannot spare much, but there's five shillings to bait the horse, and you shall have more by and by."

He spoke in a calm, ordinary tone; but when he was once more alone that apparent tranquillity deserted him, and he walked up and down the room for half an hour in a state of agitation approaching despair. Again and again he looked at the small sum upon the table, and murmured, "What shall I do?" and then recommenced his walk with a quick and irregular step. There was an ear that heard it all, and a heart that more than shared his anguish, though without knowing, without being able to conceive the circumstances, vague hints of

which showed her that he was suffering and in peril. Lucy Edmonds had the bitter pangs of self-reproach to endure, as well as sympathy and alarm for him; but he was too far plunged in vice to let such feelings add to the weight of his actual situation. She would have given worlds to have gone in and consoled him; but she had learned to fear him, too, and dared not venture; and while she was still listening to the hurried footfall, and hesitating what she should do, she heard the sound of wheels. Then a window was thrown open, and her betrayer's voice, speaking to some one over the garden-wall, inquired, "Is that you, Williams?"

Another voice answered in the affirmative, and then she caught the sound of Latimer's foot descending the stairs. The door below was opened, and then there was a pause of some minutes, after which two persons ascended to the adjoining room, and voices were heard again.

Lucy listened eagerly—not from curiosity, but from deep interest. She only heard part, however; but that part was sufficient to cause very mingled emotions. Once the light of joy rose up in her heart, and more than once terror, and anxiety, and grief took possession of her. Her lip now bore a smile—faint, indeed, although it was the smile of hope; but then again she trembled as she lay, and then turned her face to the pillow and wept. To explain the cause of such emotions, we must relate the conversation that took place in the other room; but, at the same time, it must be remembered that it was but a part, and that a small part, which Lucy Edmonds overheard, otherwise her pangs would have been more terrible than they were, and the slight gleam of hope and happiness that came upon her would have been drowned out at once in the flood of anguish.

Williams entered the room with a slow and deliberate step, and, without seating himself, stood on one side of the table, where Captain Tankerville had been placed, while Latimer remained upon the other. "I looked for you all along the road," he said, "thinking that the news might have scared you; and, indeed, when I wrote I thought it would be best for you to be off at once; but when I came to think, I saw clear enough that nobody would interrupt you till to-morrow morning, for they would be obliged to get a warrant here, as this is a different county."

"They may knock some one up," said Latimer; "and if you had not come soon, I should have gone after John Blackmore, and waited for you there."

"I called as I came by," replied Williams, "and if they do knock some one up it will take time. I must have got the start of them in setting out, by full half an hour; and those two spavined carcasses of dogs' meat that Mrs. Pluckrose calls post horses will be a pretty time upon the road, I'll answer for it. So we shall have time to talk a bit; and I want to say a word or two to you."

"Well, say away," answered Alfred Latimer, "only remember Lucy is in there;" and he pointed with his thumb to the door of the bedroom.

"Are you married yet?" asked Williams, almost

"No," answered Alfred Latimer; "not yet."

"Then I shan't say anything at all," answered Williams; "for you promised her, and you promised me, that you would marry her, and how can I trust a man who breaks his word so?"

"How the devil could I keep it sooner!" replied Latimer. "The banns have been published twice, and to-morrow's the third time—I intended to marry her the next day."

"Will you really?" asked Williams. "You seem devilish lukewarm about it. Will you swear you will?"

Alfred Latimer called down vengeance on his head, with a fearful imprecation, if he did not fulfill his word on the day after the next; and then added, "I'm not lukewarm at all about it—I'm more determined than ever, and was only thinking just now that I wished it could be to-night; for I've devilish little to share with her but my name, and that she may as well have as soon as possible. But what has all this to do with what you were going to say?"

"Why, a good deal," answered Jack Williams; "for I can tell you I intend to be off for Zante on Monday, and you may come with me, if you like. But you shan't come unless Lucy goes with you as your wife. There's a ship lying ready to sail in the Downs, which will take us all for a trifle; and when we are there we can follow out what we were talking of, you know."

Alfred Latimer was silent; and he gazed upon the table with bitter mortification, as he thought that the state of poverty to which he had reduced himself would prevent him from executing the wild and criminal but exciting scheme upon which he had been meditating for the last month. Williams looked at him with a calm and thoughtful face, not fully understanding what was passing in his mind, but yet seeing clearly that there was some impediment which made Alfred Latimer hesitate.

"Come," he said, at length, "if you are thinking of this other scheme you have in hand, it's all no use, I can tell you. Malthy told me all about it; and as soon as I heard of it I wondered how you could be such a fool as to be taken in by a pitiful, cowardly vermin, like that Tankerville, to try anything of the sort. He's not brave enough to do anything bold and manly; and you'll soon have all the magistrates upon you for your pains."

"He has taken me in, in more ways than that," replied Alfred Latimer; "but as to the magistrates, I don't care a pin about them, for they can but say that I got hold of this fellow Morton to prevent Louisa Charlton from marrying a swindler."

"Swindler!" said Williams, with a low laugh; "you know better than that; but, however, you had better keep out of the way, for if they get hold of you, and lay you up, it may prevent you from lending a hand to one scheme or the other. If you would take my advice, you'd just open the door, and let him out, and then come along with me."

"I should like to keep him in as long as I can," replied Alfred Latimer; "for as sure as he gets out he will have the constables after me, and very likely take away Lucy, too, before we are married. So I would rather have the

chance of the cards, and keep him where he is; for a thousand things may prevent the people from Mallington coming as soon as we fancy."

"There's some truth in that," replied his companion; "but, at all events, you had better come with me; keep yourself out of the way till it's blown over; come back, and marry Lucy on Monday morning; and then let us be off together over the wild sea to a country where there's plenty to be done, and where we may lead a life of pleasure and activity, instead of hanging on here, where man is always flogged back into a particular path by laws and customs that he hates, like one out of a pack of bounds."

Alfred Latimer shook his head sadly. "I can't, Williams," he said; "I can't. That fellow Tankerville has cheated me out of almost everything I had. That's all he's left me," and he pointed to the seven or eight guineas that lay upon the table.

"That's bad," said Williams, looking at the money with a grim smile. "I knew what would come of it, as soon as I heard you had anything to do with that fellow again. But come, sir, there's nothing without its remedy; and what I've got to talk to you about will be a remedy for this, if you've got the courage and determination I think you have. Though I am pretty well off in pocket for a single adventure, yet I haven't got enough for what I want. We must have a schooner of our own, Mr. Latimer, and that costs some money. We must strike a good stroke, before we go, that may fill our pockets, and set us off well; and I know where such a blow is to be struck."

Alfred Latimer raised his fingers, and pointed to the next room, with a caution not to speak so loud; and Williams proceeded in a lower tone. "I was disappointed," he said, "when I first tried this job; but I shan't be disappointed a second time, for I have got a key made to the little door that goes into the stable yard, and there are no bolts upon it. We should only have to get over the wall, and walk quietly in, to take care of the people who are in the house, and quietly to pack up what we want, and be off. Maltby had such a fright last time, that we won't have anything to do with him, though we must give him something to be quiet; but I only intend to have two with me, and, if you like, you may be one."

"Where is it?" demanded Latimer, in a whisper. "Is it Mallington Hall?"

Williams nodded his head, and both remained silent for several minutes; while Latimer first gazed down upon the ground, and then turned his eyes with a look of anxious and bitter inquiry to the small sum of money upon the table. At length his brow contracted; he set his teeth fast, and muttered between them, with a nod of the head, "I will go."

"That's right," said Williams, in the same low tone which they had been lately using. "There is certainly to the worth of five or six thousand pounds, and perhaps more."

"When is it to be?" asked his young companion, eagerly.

"To-morrow night," replied Williams; "but you had better come away with me to-night. All this job about Mr. Morton will make a good blind for your being absent. People will say you got out of the way on that account. Then you

can come back early on Monday, marry Lucy and be off for the sea."

Alfred Latimer agreed to all that he proposed, for his fortunes seemed desperate, and, like many another man, without waiting to see if, out of the clouds and darkness that surrounded him, some light would not break to guide patience and endurance unto brighter things, he hurried on upon the path before him, heedless of the abyss that yawned beneath his feet.

"I will come," he said; "I will come—and we had better be off directly, for these fellows might arrive from Mallington and stop me. But I must take some things with me, and speak to Lucy for a minute, to tell her that I will be back on Monday."

"You had better have everything arranged for your marriage by nine o'clock," said Williams, "for the sooner you are off the better. Write a note to the parson before you go, and bid Lucy meet you at the church. Then you can start at once."

"I will," replied Alfred Latimer; "and I'll write a note, and leave it on the table, for old Doctor Western, too, telling him my mind about Louisa's marriage, or give it to Lucy to give him."

"You had better a great deal tell her to keep herself out of the way all to-morrow morning," answered Williams, "for you can't tell what may happen. We'll bid John Blackmore watch about, and let her know when the people have been here, so that she may come back afterwards. But come, be quick, Mr. Latimer. I should think they must be in the town by this time."

The two notes were accordingly written with all despatch, and, taking the one addressed to the clergyman of the parish in his hand, to carry it to Lucy, Alfred Latimer was putting his little store of money in his pocket, when Williams whispered, "Give her half of it, man—never leave a woman without money;" and agreeing to the suggestion, the young man entered the chamber beyond, and closed the door. What was said Williams could not distinguish, but he heard a low, murmured conversation take place, mingled, he thought, with bitter sobs; and when Alfred Latimer returned, his face was flushed and his manner agitated.

"What's the matter?" asked Williams.

"She fancies something," answered Latimer, "and wanted to stop me; but it doesn't signify—I swore that I would come back again, so that she believes me. Now I am ready to go. But stay, I may as well put these in my pocket," and taking out a brace of pistols from a cupboard in the room, he disposed of them as he had mentioned, and followed his companion down stairs.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE summons of Mr. Quatterly was not long unattended to by Dr. Western, and in less than twenty minutes he walked into the inn of Mrs. Pluckroze, and inquired for the gentleman who wished to see him. The meeting between him and the respectable solicitor was not as that of two strangers, although they had never seen each other before; but as soon as Mr. Quatterly

announced his name, the rector shook him warmly by the hand, saying, "Very happy indeed to see you, my dear sir. But what of our young friend? Called away, doubtless, on this business suddenly; but indeed he should have given some intimation of his going, for we have all been in vast alarm about him, and one little heart in our village is well nigh breaking with terror and uncertainty; and let me tell you that heart is a treasure and not to be trifled with."

"What can't be cured must be endured, my dear doctor," replied the solicitor; "Samsan was a strong man, but he could not drink out of an empty pitcher. Our friend could not give any intimation of his departure, because he did not know he was going. There was once a Scotchman set out with another, in the Crimea, to catch a Tartar. The two friends separated in their hunt for a little way, and presently one heard the other shouting, 'Sandy! Sandy! I've caught a Tartar.' 'Well, bring him here, Donald,' quoth the other. 'I canna,' cried Donald. 'Then keep him till I come,' said Sandy. 'I canna,' repeated Donald. 'Then come here yersel,' said Sandy. 'He wunna let me,' roared Donald. Now, my dear doctor, our friend was in the position of Donald. He was in the clutches of a Tartar who would not let him do anything he thought fit to do. He was not exactly in bodily fear; for I suppose he would call me out if I were to insinuate that such a thing was possible; but he was not *liber homo*."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the rector, in some consternation, mistaking Mr. Quatterly's meaning, and thinking that for some cause, just or unjust, Morton had been arrested, "how did this happen?—I hope no foolish quarrel—no duel? He went out early, Louisa said, and—"

"Wrong, all wrong," replied the old solicitor; "you are traveling out of the record, my good friend. He was neither in the hands of sheriffs' officers nor of Bow-street officers—neither of the *constabularius vulgaris*, nor of the *sermies ad clavum*, or *ad arma*; but in the hands of a set of *Macegrarii*, as I may call them, or buyers and sellers of stolen flesh. What is their object we have yet to discover; but one thing is clear: they have kidnapped him, carried him off in a post-chaise, upon the pretence that he is insane, and taken him to the town of —, which I passed through about four hours ago—would I had known it then."

"But who can have done this?" said Dr. Western; "any of the parties, think you, to this suit that is pending?"

"Not at all, not at all," replied Mr. Quatterly; "but this young dog who, quitting his rank and station in society, chooses to associate with scamps and swindlers. Was not she a dirty slut to sell her bed and lie upon dirt? The rhyme is not correct, but that does not matter—it is no other than young Alfred Latimer, to whom he was so kind. I told him, I told him! What's bred in the bone will never come out of the flesh. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Pipkin is pipkin, and pipkin's pipkin to the last; and when he talked about reforming him and bringing him to better tastes and habits, I just hinted at the expediency of first trying to wash a black man

white. There's an old story in Esop, my dear friend, about a man and a viper—but I won't stop to tell it you now, for there is the roll of wheels, and it must be the chaise I ordered, so that the best thing you and I can do is to step in, go over to —, and ensure his liberation as fast as possible. You are a magistrate, I think!"

"But not for that county," replied Dr. Western. "Besides, my dear sir, I am not prepared for this journey. To-morrow is Sunday, and duty must, of course, be done in my church."

"Very unfortunate, very unfortunate," said Mr. Quatterly; "but surely you could get back in time for that, and I shall require some person to identify me as Timothy Quatterly, Esquire. Who are the magistrates there? What are their names? At all events, you'll come over as soon as possible to-morrow, for we may have difficulties, especially if they have taken care to get or manufacture a certificate of insanity, which seems probable, from the account of the post-boy, who brought all the information, and who says that they showed him some sort of paper about somebody being mad, he does not well know what."

Doctor Western was somewhat puzzled how to act. He saw, indeed, that his presence might be absolutely necessary to Morton's immediate liberation, and yet he knew not where to find any one on the spur of the occasion to do duty for him in his church, and he had also a very strong objection to traveling on Sunday, though he was not sufficiently bigoted to suffer that objection to interfere with the execution of a great duty. He was also somewhat puzzled to divine what could be Alfred Latimer's motive in committing so gross and outrageous an act; and, being a thoughtful and deliberate man, he took several moments to cogitate over what Mr. Quatterly said without making any reply. At length, however, the worthy solicitor, growing impatient, broke in by saying "Well, you must come to-morrow, at all events, and I will go on to-night to have all ready. I will go on with the bottle and bag, and you can come after a little jack nag. I must not forget, however, to take this post-boy with me, for I must have evidence on oath of our friend having been carried off, of the parties to the crime, and of the place to which he has been carried."

"He can be sworn before me," said Doctor Western; "it does not matter in what county he makes his deposition, provided it be properly attested."

"True, true," replied Mr. Quatterly. "We'll have him up. You shall swear him, and I'll be the clerk."

Thus saying, Mr. Quatterly rose, rolled his great body on his small legs to the door, opened it, and, going out, descended at once to the groundfloor of Mrs. Pluckrose's dwelling, where he first looked into the bar, and while the barmaid inquired "Are you looking for miss, sir?" and he himself replied "No; post-boy," he advanced to the door of the tap-room and threw it open.

"Hie! you sir," cried Mr. Quatterly, as his eye instantly rested on the post-boy. "Be so good as to come up stairs;" and he went on to mutter to himself, not venturing to say it aloud for fear of confounding the man's comprehen-

sion, "Up-stairs, down-stairs, in my lady's chamber."

As he did so, however, he swept over with his eye the rest of the persons assembled in the room, turning himself half round at the same time, as if to depart. Suddenly he came to a full stop, and then marched straight up to a man dressed in a jacket and apron, who sat on the other side of the room, with a pot of beer before him. If any body had taken the trouble to look at that man's countenance when Mr. Quatterly's large and remarkable head first presented itself in the tap, he would have seen a hue like that of death spread itself over his cheeks and lips. Yet though evidently terrified at something, he seemed fascinated, like the bird by the serpent, and continued gazing in the solicitor's face with a vacant and stone-like stare, till Mr. Quatterly stood directly before him, saying "Oh, ho!" with a very remarkable emphasis. Then his teeth began to chatter in his head, and though he gasped twice as if in the attempt to speak, no sounds issued forth from his unclosed jaws, but there he sat, the image of conscience-stricken consternation.

Mr. Quatterly remained the space of about a minute silent, also, as if in the consideration of some deep and intricate problem, but at length he spoke in an authoritative tone, saying "Be so good as to get up, sir, and walk through that door, then take the turning to the left, and up stairs to the first landing. Post-boy, follow him close, and be ready to chevy in case he runs."

But the poor wretch had no such design. He rose as he was directed, moved like an automaton to the door, which the post-boy opened for him, walked up the stairs, and there, at the top of the first landing, stood with his head bent down, his hands clasped together before him, and the same death-like hue upon his face.

"Walk in," said Mr. Quatterly, who followed close, and, at the same time, opened the door of the sitting-room. The man obeyed; and as he entered, with Mr. Quatterly behind, Dr. Western inquired, with a glance at his habiliments, which were certainly very un-post-boyish, "is this the man?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Quatterly. "This is the man who robbed me of upwards of a thousand pounds the other day;" and, turning quick upon the unfortunate Mr. Wilkins, he inquired, "Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

The man found a voice this time, but it was only to murmur in the hollow tone of despair, "nothing;" and, while he uttered that single but expressive word of self-condemnation, he still remained with his head bowed down, his eyes bent upon the ground, and his hands clasped together, hanging powerless before him.

"Nothing!" said Mr. Quatterly, who was evidently a good deal excited; "that's a poor excuse, sir—yet, after all," he continued, "it is perhaps the best you could make, for, in your case, the least said is the soonest mended. Tell me, sir, was not I a kind master to you? Did I not pay you well? Were you ever kept out late at nights if I could help it? Did I ever make you sit up till morning copying old papers and investigating titles, if I could do the work myself? Did I ever refuse you a holiday when it

was possible to grant it? Did I show myself unjust—harsh—unfeeling?"

"Never, never!" replied the man warmly. "You were all that was kind and good, and I am a fool and a scoundrel."

"There's some grace left," said Mr. Quatterly, in a loud aside, spoken over his shoulder to Dr. Western, and then continuing to address the delinquent clerk, he demanded, "and pray what do you deserve, and what do you expect?"

"Punishment," replied the man Wilkins, "though God knows I've been punished enough since."

"Ay, the heart has been at work, has it!" said Mr. Quatterly; "but tell me, sir, was it fear or remorse that amote you?"

"Both," replied the culprit earnestly; "fear breeding remorse. In the first place I have been tormented by a fiend whom you know quite well, called Captain Tankerville. He found me out, and would not be contented till he had shared largely in the spoil I had taken from a good and kind master. He preyed upon me, threatening continually to give me up to justice, till he had obtained all he thought he could get. Then he sent me off hither in this guise on the road to the sea-coast. But here remorse came upon me, and I determined to send you back all that he had left me, except what was just enough to carry me to another land, where I intended to labor for my daily bread."

"What's that you say? what's that you say?" cried Mr. Quatterly, "you determined to send it back? It's a pity you did not put that in execution, for I much fear you would have gone on nibbling, my good friend, till the cheese was all eaten up."

"No, indeed, sir," answered the wretched man; "I've got the letter and the notes here in my pocket, all folded up and sealed ready to send off, and with them are the papers which I took at the same time—here they are."

"Let's see, let's see," cried Mr. Quatterly, and he took from his former clerk's hand a large lawyer-like packet, sealed and addressed, which he broke into at once, and took out a bundle of notes and papers which he looked over carefully, putting on his spectacles to do so. Then turning to the delinquent, he said "Here are all the documents, and six hundred and eighty-five pounds. There is somewhere above four hundred pounds wanting. What have you kept for yourself? and what did you give to that fellow Tankerville?"

"I gave him three hundred and ninety pounds," replied the man; "I spent nine pounds on my way here, and I've got five-and-twenty pounds in my bundle up-stairs."

"You've only kept five-and-twenty pounds, then!" said Mr. Quatterly. "You'll swear you gave him all the rest? you'll take your oath of it?"

"I will," replied the clerk; "I have no more, and I spent no more, but gave him the rest."

"And positively you intended to send this letter?" continued the solicitor.

The man bowed his head, saying "It would have been gone by this time if you had not discovered me."

"What do you think of all this, eh?" demanded Mr. Quatterly, once more looking over

his shoulder to Dr. Western ; but the post-boy seemed to consider that the question was addressed to himself, for he advanced a step or two from the door, and pulling a long lock of hair which hung down from the front of his head over his forehead, somewhat like the haap of a trunk, he brought his chin thereby down upon his cravat, saying, at the same time, "I think, sir, as how the young man intends to make reparation ; and as for that Captain Tankerville, why, Lord bless 'ee, he was one of them fellows as carried off the gentleman from the common."

"The deuce he was!" exclaimed Mr. Quatterly, "then the murder's out, for that fellow's up to any mischief. But are you quite sure he was one!"

"That I am, your honor," replied the post-boy, "for one of them called him captain, and t'other called him Tankerville, and them two put together, makes Captain Tankerville, I think."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Quatterly ; "but that brings us back to the point. You boy, come hither to this table, and make a full, true, and particular statement before this gentleman, who is a magistrate, of all that took place regarding the abduction of Mr. Morton, remembering that you are upon your oath, for we must get up a Bible and swear you—You sir," he continued, turning to Mr. Wilkins, and pointing to the side of the room furthest from the window, "sit down in that corner, and don't budge a step till I tell you. If you behave well, perhaps you may get off easy. If you don't, you know the consequences. But I'll transport that fellow Tankerville, if there's law in the land ; and shall be transported myself to do so."

"I don't know, sir, whether you know that the chaise is at the door," said Mrs. Pluckrose, putting her head into the room ; "but I should think, surely, you would want some supper before you go."

"I want a Bible, in the first place, madam," replied Mr. Quatterly ; "and then supper, if you please, for I do begin to feel hungry ; but do not let us be interrupted for the next quarter of an hour ;" and all the arrangements being made, the deposition of the post-boy was taken in proper form ; and Dr. Western, then rising, said he would just walk up to Mallington House to relieve the apprehensions of Miss Charlton, after which he would do his best to get some one to perform the afternoon service at his church, in order that he might rejoin Mr. Quatterly on the following day.

"Take my advice, my dear sir—take my advice," said Mr. Quatterly ; "talk as little about this business as possible—give no farther explanations than needful. Just put the young lady's mind at rest, and say no more. You see," he continued, advancing to Dr. Western, and laying the fore-finger of his right hand upon the lappel of that gentleman's coat, with a demonstrative air, "you see, my dear sir, there are various reasons and sufficient motives for caution in this matter. In the first place, it does not do to let our proceedings be known, lest the persons implicated should get wind of them, and hop the twig, as school-boys term it. In the next place, we are not certain what course our

friend may think fit to pursue in regard to the gentry concerned in this outrage upon his person. One of them is, it appears, a very near connection of a fair lady for whom he has no slight tenderness ; and, besides, even if regard for her did not restrain him, his own peculiar idiosyncrasy—which, of all the idiosyncrasies that ever I knew, is most opposed to a fuss, as I term it—would probably farther lead him to pass over the matter than to make any noise about it."

"I don't see much how secrecy can be observed," said Dr. Western, gravely, "as so many persons are aware of the particulars. Here are these two men now in the room, besides Mrs. Pluckrose, who, though a very good woman has, like other ladies, a tongue not always to be restrained."

"Mrs. Pluckrose knows nothing about it," said Mr. Quatterly ; "for as soon as ever I was sure the information was really coming, and I had told her to send for you in consequence, I turned her out of the room. Then as to that man," and he pointed to his clerk, "I shall take him over with me. The other fellow, in the cordroy, has been already well cautioned, knows he may get into a scrape, and upon the whole seems to be a very sensible and well-disposed person, who understands that it is better to keep his breath to cool his porridge rather than waste it in vain gossiping. You haven't said anything to anybody yet, post-boy, have you?"

"Not a word, sir," replied the man.

"Well, then, if you take my advice," said Mr. Quatterly, "as soon as your horses are fed and reated, you'll bring them over after me, for it's as well to keep yourself out of temptation. You may talk to them in the stable, or on the road, as much as you like, and tell them the whole story if you please, for they are sure not to tell anybody again, but exchange as few words with any other beasts as possible, especially if they have but two legs."

The postboy promised to observe these injunctions faithfully, Dr. Western proceeded to execute his comfortable mission to Louisa, and Mr. Quatterly called for his supper, preparatory to setting out. He seated himself, cut off a slice of the cold beef, and put a piece in his mouth—then turned his eyes to the corner where the culprit sat as still as marble, like a statue of despair. Mr. Quatterly looked embarrassed, and felt it unpleasant to eat in the presence of so much misery. He took a glass of wine, but that did not do any better, and he looked at the culprit again with a hesitating expression of countenance. The man had not moved an inch, and Mr. Quatterly laid down the knife and fork which he had just resumed, saying, "Come, Wilkins, draw forward your chair and take some supper."

"I cannot, sir," replied Wilkins ; "I have no appetite."

"The devil you haven't!" said Mr. Quatterly ; "I'm glad to hear it, it's a good sign ;" and bolting a few hasty mouthfuls he drank another glass of wine, descended the stairs, made Wilkins get into the post-chaise first, and following himself, was soon rolling away towards the town which he had quitted a few hours before.

CHAPTER LV.

THERE was a small tea party in Mallington, just such a one as that into which we have before introduced the reader. It is true that this little reunion—as the French call a meeting of persons who very probably never met in their life before—wanted some of the principal ornaments of the former. Mr. Nethersole was absent, the solicitor did not appear; but their two principal representatives were in the room; in the persons of the assistant of the one, and the chief clerk of the other. Mrs. Windsor was there, the two Misses Martin, two young ladies in broad bracelets and ringlets, which must have been curled upon what mechanicians call a never-ending screw. Their mother was there likewise, Mr. Crump was present, and a number of other gentlemen and ladies, with whom the writer and the reader are equally unacquainted. It was what they called themselves a small early party, beginning at six o'clock, and ending at nine. There is, therefore, no very great chance of our being detained long, though we may sit down and listen for a minute or two to the conversation which took place over the cup of tea, and the game of cards that followed.

One of the principal delights of these parties, to those who loved to see human nature under an unpleasant aspect, was the effect produced upon the temper of the Misses Martin, when the repulsive poles of those young ladies and Mrs. Windsor were brought in contact; but upon this occasion Mrs. Windsor was rather civil than otherwise to the Misses Martin. True it is that she could not altogether repress a certain degree of acerbity of manner in speaking to them, for she was a quick, sharp woman, and had a very profound contempt for them. If they had been only rogues—if they had been only slanderers—if they had only been both combined, Mrs. Windsor could have forgiven it; but she looked upon them as fools too, and that was a sort of animal for which she had a great antipathy.

The ruling topic of the day was, of course, that first introduced. Mallington had rung all the morning with the disappearance of Mr. Morton, and the Misses Martin had derived so much comfort from the fact, that they could not help endeavoring to extract a little more from it during the evening. They whispered together with the young surgeon, shrugged their shoulders, professed that they had been perfectly sure how it would turn out, and called upon one or two of their neighbors to bear witness to the fact of their prophecies having been antecedent to the event.

"Poor Mrs. Charlton!" said Miss Mathilda, "I'm very sorry for her; but I wonder that she made such a fuss about it. It would have been better to have kept it quiet, I can't help thinking—but I know Mrs. Windsor thinks that everything Mrs. Charlton does is right," continued she, with a glance of the eye to the lady of whom she spoke, "and so I shall say no more."

"Oh dear, no! Miss Mathilda Martin," replied Mrs. Windsor, turning round while Mr. Crump was shuffling the cards; "you are quite mistaken. I don't think everything Mrs. Charlton does is right. She does many things I would much rather she would not do."

"Dear me!" cried Miss Martin; "well, I did not know that before. But how does she bear it, Mrs. Windsor? for really I am sorry for her, more sorry a great deal than for Miss Louisa, for she's a girl of sense, and must be glad that before matters went too far he has been found out."

"Found out!" said Mrs. Windsor. "Gone out, I suppose, you mean, Miss Martin."

"Oh dear, no!" replied Mathilda, "my sister means found out. I don't know what you can call it, Mrs. Windsor, when there are bills posted up all over the place for a gentleman, and as soon as he sees them he takes himself off, but being found out for what he really is."

"And what may that be?" asked Mrs. Windsor. "I really don't know what you mean!"

"Why, I suppose there can be no doubt in the mind of anybody who has eyes, ears, and understanding, that this Mr. Morton who has down here is the felonious clerk that has been advertised for."

"Really, I think not," replied the housekeeper of Mallington House; "and I don't at all doubt that we shall soon hear of Mr. Morton again—I hope in safety, though I have some apprehensions on that score after what happened before."

"Oh! I dare say he's skulking about in some of the woods or places," replied Miss Mathilda Martin; "very likely over at Wenlock, where he was so fond of going; but I dare say the officers will find him out."

Mrs. Windsor did not condescend to answer, but cut through Mrs. Ramebottom's game with a trump; and after waiting for a minute or two, Miss Martin pursued the agreeable conversation as follows:—

"I am sorry for poor Miss Louisa, too. The poor dear child has been made a sacrifice for others, that's clear. Does she take on much, Mrs. Windsor?"

"Miss Charlton has been very much alarmed, and very anxious," answered Mrs. Windsor; "as, indeed, any young lady naturally would be on the unexplained absence of such a friend of the family as Mr. Morton."

"Oh, come, Mrs. Windsor!" cried Miss Mathilda; "you don't pretend to say that's all, for we know better than that. Young people don't go about together in that way without being engaged; and if it has been suffered in this case Mrs. Charlton's much more to blame than ever I thought her."

"Your thoughts won't do her much harm," replied Mrs. Windsor, "or anybody else, or we should be an unfortunate set of people in Mallington. But, as I said before, it is very natural both for Mrs. Charlton and Miss Louisa to be anxious about Mr. Morton, as, indeed, everybody is who knew him, even to the footboy, for he is a perfect gentleman."

"A gentleman!" said Miss Mathilda. "Well, puppies don't open their eyes till they are nine days old, and some people never open them at all till they are forced. However, for the matter of that, I dare say we shall soon hear more, and then it will be seen who's right."

Mrs. Windsor played out her rubber in silence; and about nine o'clock, or a little before, took her leave, and left the Misses Martin in possession of the field. They triumphed wonder-

fully—they were eloquent—they were pathetic—they were sublime; they left nothing unsaid that could be said upon the subject of Mr. Morton, Mrs. Charlton, and Louisa; they even touched episodically upon Dr. Western, lamenting the culpable negligence of the constable, in not having prevented the escape of the fraudulent clerk; and declared that things were getting so bad there must really be some active justice of the peace appointed to insure that Mallington, which had always before been such a nice, quiet, pleasant little village, should not become a den of swindlers and ruffians; and hinted that it had never been the same place since Mrs. Charlton had first set her foot in it. By dint of oratory and perseverance they got a great many of their hearers on their side, and the day was running strong against the Morton faction when the party broke up. In the meanwhile Mrs. Windsor walked up the hill towards Mallington House, not very slow, because she thought her mistress might want her, not very quick, because she was in a meditative mood. Now, Mrs. Windsor was endowed with a quality usually ascribed to a certain small animal with a long tail accustomed to frequent the drains and minor passages of not the newest mansions in the world, which quality is a certain inherent prescience of the approaching fall of the house. By aid of this gift the housekeeper had arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Charlton was in a somewhat tottering condition. At the same time it appeared to her that Miss Charlton and Mr. Morton were likely to build up a dwelling of a much more firm and stable construction, and she was strongly disposed to detach herself from the dilapidated and attach herself to the perfect house. The only consideration, indeed, was whether she was likely to succeed in the latter part of her object, but Mrs. Windsor had all her life been a very shrewd woman. She had been peculiarly kind and civil to Louisa Charlton at all times, with a degree of foresight which Mrs. Charlton herself had not possessed. She had never exactly taken the young lady's part against her mistress; for not only would that have been dangerous as affecting Mrs. Charlton, but Mrs. Windsor had a strong notion, and a right one, that the appearance of ingratitude towards a person whom she had so long served would be no passport to the favor of Louisa. She had, therefore, never blamed anything that Mrs. Charlton did—she had never opposed any of her unjust or unwise acts towards Louisa—but by a thousand little marked and kindly attentions, especially apparent at those times when the young lady was suffering under any of the mortifications inflicted on her by her step-mother, she had not only endeavored to soothe and comfort her, but cast an implied censure upon the conduct which required such counteraction. Thus Mrs. Windsor imagined that her chance was a very fair one, even as matters stood at that moment; and as she foresaw that a time was coming when a breach was likely to take place between Mrs. Charlton and her step-daughter in regard to the marriage of the latter with Mr. Morton, she thought several little pieces of information which she possessed, and which might be most serviceable to the two young people, might form a link between her and them, which would ren-

der her station in their regard quite secure. Something was necessary, however, as an excuse for deserting the interests of her mistress, and she could think of nothing better than a personal quarrel which would put Mrs. Charlton in the wrong towards herself. She saw every probability, indeed, of such a result being easily brought about, for Mrs. Charlton had been very irritable of late, and had vented a good deal of that irritability upon Mrs. Windsor, not being at all aware to what extent she was in the housekeeper's power. Mrs. Windsor had submitted hitherto in silence, because she thought it would be politic so to do; but as she calculated that a crisis was very near at hand, she now determined to submit no longer, but to retaliate in such a manner as to call forth the whole of Mrs. Charlton's spleen, without, however, putting herself in the wrong, or giving her mistress the advantage over her in any respect. One thing, too, she especially determined to refrain from, and that was from all allusion to her knowledge of Mrs. Charlton's secret plans for the future, or acts in the past, till the moment when it might be necessary to proclaim them aloud, for she was well aware that that excellent lady had sufficient art to govern her passions completely if she found it dangerous to display them, and to avoid anything like a quarrel with her housekeeper, if she believed it to be more for her interest to be friends with her.

With these resolutions, the result of which will soon be seen by the reader, Mrs. Windsor rang the servant's bell at Mallington House.

CHAPTER LVI.

He was a fool, and not a philosopher, who said that uncertainty was the just condition of man's mind. In trust, in confidence, in firm conviction, and in faith, is only to be found repose and peace. Assurance is what man's heart and understanding both require, and the very fact of the mind not being capable of obtaining certainty upon many points is a proof of weakness, not of strength.

"Oh, doubt and uncertainty, what terrible states they are amongst the perilous things and anxious circumstances of this mortal life! How the news of the battle fought, how the howling of the angry storm will fix the fangs of those two demons upon the heart of the soldier's or sailor's mother or his wife!—how they tear the breast of the absent for the loved afar—how they aggravate all pangs—how they mingle the bitter drop with many a cup of joy!

They were the companions of Lucy Edmonds through the livelong night after Alfred Latimer left her; and many a dark and terrible form they took as, with sleepless eyes, she lay and revolved the past, the present, and the future—all sad, all cloudy, all full of frowning menaces. Whither was he gone! she asked herself. What to do!—what new folly, what new sin, what new crime to commit! Would he indeed return as he had said! or was she abandoned as well as betrayed—cast off upon the hard world—homeless, defenceless, powerless, fatherless! Her heart sunk low—low till it hardly beat. Was it not in his character to do

so!—was it not man's accustomed dealings with the weak!—were not all his actions, since she had seen them closely, evidences that he could so act? The very doubt was worse than death; yet she strove not to believe it, for she loved him still. She tried to shut out conviction of his faults and of his nature. 'Oh, no! it was impossible he could so use her, she thought; but still she doubted, and doubt was agony.

Then came the fears for him. What would be the end of such a course as he was pursuing!—what the consequences that must sooner or later fall upon his head? All was wild uncertainty; but, like the clouds of a thunder-storm, the phantoms of the future, though vague and changing, still took a thousand dark and terrible forms. Minute after minute passed away, hour after hour went by, but every minute brought some fresh pang, every hour was consumed in bitterness and dread.

At length the day began to dawn, and the faint gray light of the autumnal morning streamed in through the half-closed curtains; but it woke no joy, it brought no relief. Faint and sick at heart, weary, desponding, and filled with dark remorse, daylight brought no day to Lucy Edmonds' heart. Within it all was night. Still she lay and pondered for some time longer; but at length hearing sounds in the house, and remembering the injunctions laid upon her to go out early and remain absent long, she rose and dressed herself, and walked languidly into the other room. The maid of the house was clearing the table, and the sight of the bottles and glasses and scattered cards made poor Lucy feel sick at heart. She turned away to the window, bidding the girl bring breakfast quickly; but the moment after the latter inquired "What is to be done with this, ma'am?"

Lucy turned and saw in her hands the note to Dr. Western, which Latimer had mentioned to her ere he went. "Leave it on the table," she said; "a gentleman will call during the day for it. Ask any one who comes if his name is Dr. Western, and if he says 'yes,' let him have it."

The sight of that note, however, recalled to her mind the other which had been left with her for the clergyman of the parish, and the words and assurance that Latimer had then spoken, and she seized upon them eagerly as food for half-famished hope. "Oh, yes!" she thought, "he will come back—he will keep his word—he will take away the stain from me; though he can never give me back peace, he will give me at least an honest name;" and hurrying into the other room again, she brought forth the letter and gazed upon it with one faint ray of light breaking in upon her darkened heart.

The maid brought in the breakfast, and Lucy began to say something to her, but hesitated, and then stopped. The girl was slow in laying out the things, and poor Lucy watched her as she did so, putting off till the last moment what she had to say. At length, as the girl was just quitting the room, she said, "I wish to speak with your master—presently."

The last word was added with a view to further delay, but the maid had not quitted the room five minutes when the landlord of the house appeared, inquiring "Did you want me, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir," said Lucy, hesitating and embarrassed. "Mr. Latimer will be out all to-day, but will be back to-morrow morning early, and he wished me to give this letter to the clergyman of the parish;" she paused for a moment, and then added, "Where does he live?"

The man gave her the information that she required; and then, seeing that she was embarrassed, he good-humoredly added, "I suppose it's about your marriage, ma'am. I heard the banns published for the second time last Sunday."

It was a great relief to Lucy, but yet her face turned crimson, and her heart beat so that she pressed her hand upon her side as if to stop it. "Yes," she said, when she recovered breath; "it is to take place a little after nine to-morrow, and Mr. Latimer told me to ask if you would be kind enough to—to go with me to the church, as I have no friends here;" and overpowered at the thought that she had no friends who would own her anywhere, poor Lucy covered her eyes with her handkerchief and wept.

"Oh, that I will, madam, with pleasure," replied the gardener. "Come, come, don't tako on so. Most people have to be married once, and it's not such a terrible affair, after all. I was married once myself, and my good wife, that's dead and gone, tittered the whole time till the parson scolded her. Shall I take the note for you?"

"No, I thank you, sir," replied Lucy, wiping her eyes; "I am going out, and I promised to deliver it myself."

Though she said no more, the man still remained, as if he had something more to say; and Lucy, misunderstanding his object, inquired, "Did Mr. Latimer pay the rent last week?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied the gardener; "we always have a week in advance. He paid everything yesterday morning up to Saturday next; but I hope, I'm sure, that I shall have you for a lodger a long while after you are Mrs. Latimer."

"I trust so," replied Lucy, merely for something to say, "for it is a very pretty place, and the lodging is very comfortable."

"One thing I wanted to ask, ma'am," continued the landlord, after another pause; "what's to be done with the gentleman whom they say is insane—with him, I mean, whom Mr. Latimer and the rest brought in yesterday and shut up in the room where he had the bars put. He must have some breakfast and dinner, I suppose."

"I don't know anything about him," replied Lucy, with surprise; "I heard a good many people coming and going yesterday, but I was in the other room, and am not aware of what happened."

"Well, ma'am, he can't starve," replied the landlord.

"Oh, certainly not," exclaimed Lucy; "he must have all that is necessary, of course. Can you not take it to him?"

"Why, you see, ma'am, I don't like to have anything to do with the matter," answered the gardener; "besides, the door is locked, and I haven't got the key."

"I suppose this is it," said Lucy, taking a large key from the mantel-piece.

But the landlord still shook his head, saying, "I don't like to have anything to do with what doesn't concern me. But the man must have victuals, that's clear;" and he took a step back, as if to quit the room.

Poor Lucy was sadly embarrassed; she knew not what to say, or how to act, and the whole story confounded and perplexed her. "Mad!" she thought—"what can Alfred have to do with a madman?" Doubts, painful suspicions, in regard to the whole proceeding, crossed her mind, for she had lost confidence in him she loved; she could not trust to his motives or his conduct; she could not be sure that some dark scheme for wronging another as she had been wronged herself might not now be in operation. After a long pause for consideration, however, she inquired—"Is he dangerous?"

"Oh dear, no!" replied the landlord. "He seemed quite quiet. For my part I should not have thought him mad at all."

"Then I will go to him myself," said Lucy, "if you will send up the maid to go with me, and see that he does not hurt me."

The worthy host did as she required; and though, to say the truth, he had very little doubt that the gentleman up-stairs was just as sane as he was himself, yet, while he sent up the maid to accompany his fair lodger, he remained with the door open in the little parlor below, to insure that they should have assistance in case of need. In the meanwhile, Lucy, having put on her bonnet and shawl to go out, followed by the girl, and with the key in her hand, approached the door above—in some trepidation, it must be confessed. But there seemed no other means of insuring that the person within, whoever he was, should have that attention which humanity required; and without pausing to give time for fear to overpower her, she put the key in the lock and opened the door. The first object that met her eye was Mr. Morton, seated at the table, and looking straight towards her. She stood for an instant motionless and speechless, as if she had been turned into stone at the sight. Her countenance was pale, too, for fear was the first impression that she received; but the next instant the blood rushed up into her face, and, exclaiming, "Oh! heaven!" she turned, and ran down the stairs before Morton could rise to speak with her, and in another minute was out of the house. Hurrying on with a quick pace, she walked into the town, and took her way up one street and down another at random, with all her thoughts in confusion and disarray. Gradually, however, she became more tranquil, though it was a sad and dark tranquillity that fell upon her; an oppressive leaden weight, from the sad conviction that her worst suspicions of him who had so wronged herself were all too true.

Yet there was no choice before her what to do; she was the creature of his will, entirely dependent upon him. She had no means of escape from the situation in which she was placed—her fate was sealed and irrevocable. The only thing that could bring the slightest amelioration was to become his wife, and link herself to him for ever—to him whom she knew to be a villain, not only to woman, but to man. Despair has its own calmness, and after awhile

she thought clearly and accurately of what she should do, and determined to execute all that he had enjoined. Still she had some dread of again meeting Morton, for the sight of any face that she had known in purer and happier days was terrible to her. She doubted not that he had instantly quitted the house, for she was quite sure that no opposition would be offered by the man to whom it belonged, and, looking anxiously up each street as she went, she made her way round by the least frequented parts of the town to the dwelling of the clergyman. Thence, after leaving Latimer's note, she directed her steps into the country, which was smiling in all the beauty of a fresh autumnal day. The atmosphere was peculiarly clear and bright, the leaves of the trees were just tinged with the first yellow hues of advancing decay, the distant country looked purple in the early light, and a small stream danced along by the road-side in sparkling eddies and miniature cataracts. But the face of nature had lost its loveliness for Lucy Edmonds, and every object which once would have seemed bright and beautiful to her eyes, was now only full of sad remembrances.

At the distance of about a mile and a half from the town there was a small village, and a neat church, evidently of very ancient structure; for the yews in the churchyard and the ivy upon the walls showed the growth of many centuries; and the old Norman arch of the porch, with its deep and manifold mouldings, softened and pared away by the hand of time, spoke the reign of some early king, before the house of Anjou obtained possession of the crown. As Lucy approached, the bell began to ring with a cheerful and yet solemn sound, calling the villagers to suplicate and glorify God on the appointed day of rest. But, oh! how sadly did that chime sound in the ear of poor Lucy Edmonds—what memories did it not wake of the days of youth and innocence, when she, with the rest, went forth in her Sunday attire, beneath the protection of parental love, to prayer, to praise, and to instruction. She looked up wistfully towards the church—she longed to go in with others who were bending their steps towards the gate; but her heart sank, she felt a fear and a dread, the consciousness of unworthiness was upon her, and it seemed to her at first like presumption to enter the house of God and to address the essence of all purity from amongst the pure.

She lingered, however, for a time in the churchyard, watching the passers-by, and her eye from time to time resting upon the tombstones, where, amongst homely phrases of commendations on the gone, she found many a text of Scripture full of hope and consolation.

"Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you," said the inscription on one tomb; and another bore "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." She took heart as she read, and with bent-down eyes and a slow step she entered the church with the rest. She had not known comfort before since she left her father's house, but as she prayed and listened she gained both consolation and strength. She resolved thenceforward to have but one

rule for her life, and, whatever might be the difficulties to which she might be subject, whatever the temptations to which she might be exposed, rather to die than to take one more step in evil.

"If he keeps his word," she thought, "tomorrow he will be my husband, and I am bound to obey him in all that is right; but, whatever be his own course, he shall not induce me to take any part in evil also, and by the repentance of my whole life I will try to atone for what is past."

With this resolution she bent her way back to the town again, and though she saw nothing of young Blackmore, who was to have given her notice when she might safely return, she went back to the house she had inhabited, and rang the bell. The door was opened by the gardener himself. "Well, ma'am, he's gone," he said, as soon as he saw her; "I couldn't stop him, you know, when you left the door open, so I thought it best to be civil."

"You did quite right," said Lucy, in a calmer tone than she could have used in the morning. "I foolishly went away as quickly as I could, for fear of hearing of that gentleman's reproaches, though I had no share in the injury that has been done him, but if I had stayed and had the power I would not have attempted to stop him."

"Why, he did not seem at all inclined to reproach any one, ma'am," said the gardener; "he seemed a very civil sort of gentleman, indeed, and not mad in the least, I'm sure. He asked a great many questions about you, and stayed half an hour, I dare say, talking with me in the passage."

Lucy did not venture to inquire what Mr. Morton's questions had been, and, for fear she should hear what might be painful to her, she answered quickly, "Oh, no, he is not mad at all. However, I should not wish to see any body if they come, and should there be gentlemen here inquiring after him, you can assure them that he is gone."

"I hope, ma'am," said the landlord, with his habitual view to his own interest, "that if Mr. Latimer should make any row about his being let out, you will acknowledge you did it, and that I had no hand in it."

Lucy bowed her head, replying, "I will do so, certainly, for it is the plain truth."

"You had better say nothing about it till after the wedding," rejoined the landlord; "and then, when you are once his wife, I dare say you'll soon get the upper hand."

Lucy made no reply, but walked up-stairs and wept, for there was something in the man's words that made her feel her degradation more perhaps than she had ever felt it before.

Several hours passed by, and evening was approaching, when the maid took up a note, saying that a man had brought it from the inn. He did not know whether there was any answer, the girl added, but was waiting to see. Lucy opened it with trembling hands, thinking to find Mr. Morton's name, but glancing her eye at once to the bottom of the paper, she saw the word Western, and turning again to the beginning, she read the following lines:—

"I grieve much for you, Lucy, and believe, my poor child, that you are more sinned against

than sinning. I have some reason to suppose that you have been very badly used; but if this young man is really willing to make you his wife, I will say nothing to dissuade you from consenting to a step which is the only reparation that he can offer. I do trust, however, Lucy, that the instructions you have received, the religious principles which were early implanted in your mind, and the example of your excellent parents, have not been so cast away as to admit the possibility of your continuing in a life of sin, if this unhappy young man should neglect or delay to fulfill his promises. My eye is upon you, and it will become my duty to exhort you most earnestly to quit him at once in case of any delay taking place. Should you follow my counsel, and thereby show true repentance for any error you may have committed, which I believe to be less than many might suppose, come at once to me, and no effort shall be wanting on my part to place you in a situation of comfort, and to screen you from those reproaches and that hard treatment which never yet awoke an impenitent heart, and can only add to the pangs of one that is truly penitent. You have known me from your infancy, and can trust me both as a counsellor and as your sincere friend. "R. WESTERN."

Lucy gazed on the letter, long after she had read it, with emotions very mixed; but yet hope predominated; for that very word "friend" at the end had something balmy and comforting to her breast. At length, recollecting that the maid was still waiting to know if there was any answer, she gave her the note which Alfred Latimer had left, and bade her deliver it to the man who had come from Dr. Western. The rest of the evening passed over tranquilly, and Lucy was glad to be alone. For many days before solitude had been burdensome, terrible, to her; but now it was a relief, for the only light that she could receive—the only hope that could find place in her bosom—had been given from the high pure source that offers peace to all who will accept it.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE butler opened the door of Mallington House, in answer to Mrs. Windsor's bell, and looked at her with a meaning smile as she entered, saying, in a low voice, "You'll get it, ma'am, to-night, I've a notion; for Mrs. Charlton's in a queer way; quite out of sorts with everything and everybody. She has scolded Miss Louisa till she cried, and at dinner she rowed me for the best part of an hour."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Windsor dryly, without the slightest appearance of intimidation. "I do not think she will scold me, for I have not done anything to deserve it;" and she pulled off her clogs deliberately in the little vestibule.

"Perhaps that is the very reason why she will," replied the butler, watching Mrs. Windsor in the delicate operation she was performing. "At all events, she has gone to her dressing-room, and rang for you three times, with about ten minutes between each, and she told Smith, who went up, that your conduct was too bad, and that she would put up with it no longer. So, if I were you, I would just keep

away till to-morrow, for she must be half in bed by this time, and her passion will be over before morning."

"Oh dear, no!" replied Mrs. Windsor, with a look of conscious innocence. "I shall go up directly. I could not tell she would go to bed before nine o'clock, or I would have been back earlier. She has a headache, I suppose, poor thing; and that always makes people cross."

"Why, I believe all this fuss about Mr. Morton's disappearing has put her out," replied the butler; "but for my part, if I were you, I would stay away, and let her cool; for, as far as you are concerned, all the mischief's done; but you know best."

Mrs. Windsor, however, who did know best, and found all things prepared for her, and exactly in the state she could have wished, signified once more her intention of presenting herself before her mistress at once, in so cool and satisfied a tone that the butler was disappointed.

There is certainly in the breasts of many persons a great pleasure in the communication of evil tidings; they like it, they approve of it; they take a philanthropic interest in preventing others from being too happy, lest they should become puffed up with prosperity. Now, the worthy butler had opened the door himself for Mrs. Windsor, with the express desire of letting her know that Mrs. Charlton was angry, and enjoying the apprehension he thought that piece of news would awaken; for Mrs. Windsor had too much the ear of her mistress—she had too much her own way—her place was too comfortable a one—for any of the other servants not to see that it would be greatly to her advantage to meet with a little mortification; and the benevolent butler was anxious to administer the first dose in person. The very cool way, however, in which she took it, did, as we say, disappoint him, and watching her take a candle, and walk straight up stairs towards Mrs. Charlton's dressing-room, he said "Well, that woman has the impudence of the devil," and betook himself to his pantry again.

In the meanwhile the housekeeper knocked at the dressing-room door, and on hearing a sharp "Come in," she entered, saying, "The butler tells me, you wanted me, ma'am."

"Wanted you!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton. "I have been waiting for you this hour. I have rang three times for you; and the answer has always been that you were out. You are always gadding about, it seems to me, and I shall not put up with this any longer. You presume upon my good nature, because you are an old servant; but my patience is come to an end, and I will have different conduct."

"I am very sorry, ma'am, you had to wait," replied the maid, in a tone of perfect civility, "but I don't see how I could help it; or what change I can make to please you."

"Do not answer me, Windsor!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton. "I am not in a humor to put up with any insolence."

"I am not going to be insolent in the least, ma'am," replied the housekeeper; "but when I am accused of neglecting my duty, I must say something for myself. I could not tell that you would go to bed so early. I am home now two hours before your usual time, and—"

"I will not have you answer me in this way," exclaimed the lady again, with increasing vehemence. "I will be obeyed by my servants, at least, though Miss Charlton may think fit to be as insolent and self-willed as she likes."

It was too fair an opportunity for planting a hit to be neglected by Mrs. Windsor; and she instantly replied, "Ah! poor dear young lady, I am sure she is too gentle and tractable to be insolent or self-willed, whatever she may suffer."

"You impudent minx!" cried Mrs. Charlton, her eyes flashing fire, "do you mean to say I make Miss Charlton suffer! Well, upon my life, this is too bad—Oh! I can see it all. There's no use of more words. I dare say the housekeeper's room is ringing all day long with my unkindness to Miss Charlton. I'm a true step-mother, and everything Miss Charlton does is right, and everything I do wrong! All the neighborhood hears of it, I'll warrant, and not a lady's maid for ten miles round does not pity the poor thing! But I've seen your coggling and your dattery of her. I understand it all—worshipping the rising sun; but you may find yourself mistaken, all of you, for I'll put up with it no more, but make a clear house of you."

Mrs. Windsor had endeavored in vain to interpose a word or two, not for the purpose of allaying her mistress's anger, but of adding fuel to the fire. The torrent of Mrs. Charlton's indignation, however, gave no opportunity, for she went on with a volubility which left no space between her words. Mrs. Windsor was well aware, and had been so for many years, that the good lady was not that gentle, graceful and composed person, at all times, that she appeared in public; for more than once, even in her earlier and brighter days, she had had opportunities of seeing little bursts of passion not at all dignified or pleasant. The present indulgence, however, was somewhat more than ordinary, and if she had not been a stout-hearted woman, the housekeeper might have been somewhat alarmed; but as things were taking the exact course that she could have desired, she determined to clench the affair by a slight touch of civil contempt; and consequently, when Mrs. Charlton paused to take breath, after threatening to make a clear house of all her servants, she replied in a calm and deferential tone, "I think, ma'am, you had better consider of that first, for the servants might take you at your word. There are a good many of them, and their wages have not been paid for nine months!"

Mrs. Charlton's face grew redder than before, though it was a good deal inflamed with indignation. There was so much truth, however, in Mrs. Windsor's hint, and her finances for the time were at so low an ebb, that during several minutes she could only reply, "Well, I'm sure!" repeating the same formula more than once, without going on to state what it was she was sure of. Mrs. Windsor, in the mean time, remained perfectly calm and grave, looking in her mistress's face, with a very provoking degree of placidity, till at length Mrs. Charlton, recovering her composure in some degree, nodded her head significantly, saying "You shall go, at least, my good lady. Make up your mind to that. I did not mean the other servants; but I mean you—and you understand me."

"Oh, yes, ma'am," replied Mrs. Windsor. "You mean to give me warning, and I take it, though I don't deserve such treatment. But that being settled, I will only just tell you what I've been about this afternoon, which you would not hear before, though it's a matter of some consequence. I saw Mr. Spraggs this morning, and he had with him a gentleman who came down from the jewellers in London. I told him that I was sure that in a week or ten days you would be able to pay everything, but he said they were not inclined to wait any longer. I persuaded him to go and see the other tradesmen, however, and talk to them; and as I didn't get any answer, I went down myself."

"And what did they say, Windsor?" asked Mrs. Charlton, in a very much altered tone, for the housekeeper's intelligence, though partly fictitious and partly true, had instantly brought her down several steps in the ladder of pride.

"Why, ma'am, I did my best," replied Mrs. Windsor, "and they consented to wait till Saturday next."

"Well, then, it must be done before then," said Mrs. Charlton, speaking to herself, and subsequently falling into a fit of meditation.

"Have you any other commands, ma'am," asked the housekeeper, after waiting a reasonable time.

"No, Windsor, no," replied her mistress; and then added, in a coaxing tone, "you should not reply when you see me angry, Windsor. You don't know how many things I have to vex me. There, go away now, and let us forget all that's past."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," said Mrs. Windsor, dropping a low courtesy; "but I can't quite forget. You have called me an impudent minx, and you have given me warning. No mistress shall ever do so twice. I was a faithful servant to you always, ma'am, but after what you have said I am your servant no longer;" and bringing by a natural process, which some women can command, a good deal of water into her eyes, Mrs. Windsor dropped another low courtesy and quitted the room, leaving Mrs. Charlton laboring under the unpleasant conviction that she had made a great mistake in regard to her housekeeper's extent of long-suffering.

Straight from Mrs. Charlton's dressing-room the maid, with her candle in her hand and her eyes still comfortably red, took her way to the door of the drawing-room, opened it, and went two steps in; then suddenly stopped, as if in great surprise at seeing Miss Charlton and Dr. Western, who were seated on the sofa at a little distance. "I beg pardon, ma'am," she said, "I thought you were gone to bed, and came to see that all was right; but I'm really so flurried that I don't know what I'm doing."

"What is the matter, Windsor," said Louisa, who, while the maid spoke, had full opportunity of seeing the tears in her eyes; "You look as if you had been crying."

"Oh! nothing, ma'am," replied Mrs. Windsor; "it is only that my mistress has given me warning."

"You, Windsor!" exclaimed Louisa in a tone of great surprise; "you who have been with us so long. What could that be for!"

"Oh! ma'am, it is not for me to say," replied the housekeeper in a humble tone; "I dare

say I was wrong, but I could not bear to hear those I respect spoken ill of, and I answered my mistress when I ought to have held my tongue. So she called me an impudent minx, and gave me warning."

"Oh! I dare say she'll think better of it to-morrow," replied Louisa, in a kindly tone. "She's angry about something to-night; she would be sorry to part with you, I'm sure."

"I beg pardon, ma'am," answered Mrs. Windsor; "but I cannot stay with her. I may be wrong in that too; but, after what she said of me and others, it's quite impossible;" and, putting her handkerchief to her eye, Mrs. Windsor, with another low courtesy, withdrew from the room. And so all that was settled quite to her satisfaction.

CHAPTER LVIII.

It must not be denied that Mr. Morton had passed a very unpleasant day and night before Lucy Edmonds opened the door of the room in which he was confined. It is not pleasant to any man to be shut up, and unable to get out, whatever be the nature of the lock which is put upon his door. It may be steel or iron—it may be the command of an absolute prince—it may be a soldier with a fixed bayonet—it may be the prescription of a doctor—but whatever it is, it is by no means agreeable. There were various aggravations, also, of the ordinary unpleasantness in Mr. Morton's case; and, for the purpose of making our climax perfect, we will begin with the least romantic one first. Alas! even heroes must eat, although, according to the account of Tasso and Ariosto, and other great poets, it is not necessary for heroes to do so; but Mr. Morton was not a hero in the usual acceptation of the word. When necessary, he could go without his dinner as well as another man, but he had a great objection to do anything upon compulsion, and to fast as much as aught else. That day, however, and the whole of that night he was forced to do so, for Alfred Latimer, with his usual selfishness, forgot that any body must eat besides himself; and had it not been for a caraffe of water which stood upon the washing-stand, the captive would have had to do without drinking, also.

Nevertheless, though all this was very disagreeable, and although Morton resolved the very next morning to knock out a panel of the door with tables, or chairs, or bedposts, or anything he could find, even at the risk of confirming any impression of his insanity which might have been given to the people of the house, yet this was not what troubled him the most. He had various important pieces of business to transact; he knew that his presence, his signature, or his directions might be needed at any time, in regard to matters that would bear no delay; he expected every day and every hour to receive news from London which might require instant decision; and he did not at all like being deprived of his liberty at such a moment. But there was another circumstance still more unpleasant to him: he thought of the feelings of Louisa Charlton, of her anxiety, of her apprehensions regarding him; he summed up in imagination all that he himself would have

felt if she had so suddenly disappeared; he added one half more for the difference between the acuteness of a woman's feelings and those of a man; and thus he made himself as uncomfortable as might be during the whole of the day when he was seized and the night that followed.

To see his door opened at all, then, was a relief to him, and when he beheld a woman's face, instead of that of Alfred Latimer and his accomplices, it was very satisfactory; for he had determined to make a struggle for liberty at all risks; and he knew that the event might be doubtful. But when he perceived who it was, other feelings mingled with those personal ones which first crossed his mind, and all the interest which he had taken in the poor girl's fate instantly revived. "Lucy!" he exclaimed, "Lucy Edmonds!"

But Lucy stayed not to hear, and the sudden glance of surprise she gave him, the look of fear and the burning glow of shame that followed, showed him at once that whatever was the cause of her coming, she had been utterly ignorant of his being there, and that she was both terrified and distressed to see him. He paused for a moment to consider rather what was the state of the poor girl's mind than what his own conduct should be. He asked himself whether she had really become corrupt in heart, notwithstanding all that Dr. Western had told him of her early life, or whether she had been made the victim, as he had suspected, of mingled fraud and violence, and was an unwilling and sorrowful partaker in the guilt of others, perhaps from weakness in herself or from the power of circumstances.

The deep blush with which she had seen him answered him, at least on one point; and, walking out through the door she had left open, he descended uninterrupted to the passage below, and, after pausing for a moment to see if any one would appear, he entered the parlor, where he heard somebody move. "Are you the master of this house?" he demanded, as the worthy gardener stood before him, not knowing very well what to say or do.

"Yes, sir," replied the gardener; "that is to say, I am the landlord—not exactly the master, for I let part of it."

"You must be aware, sir," said Morton, in a calm, grave tone, "that a very shameful and criminal act has been committed in bringing me hither. But I do not wish to speak upon that subject at present, as I shall take what measures I think fit hereafter in regard to the chief perpetrators of that act."

"Lord, sir, I had nothing to do with it," replied the gardener; "I let my lodgings, and know little or nothing about what takes place in them. I'm sure it's no fault of mine."

"Perhaps not," replied Morton; "but, as I said before, on that subject I do not intend to speak just now. Is Mr. Latimer in your house at present?"

"No, sir," replied the gardener, in a respectful manner; for there was something in Morton's tone so gentlemanly, and yet so commanding, that he felt at once that he had to do with a very superior person to his lodger. "No, sir, he has gone out for the whole day."

"And, pray," demanded Morton, "in what

relation does that young person who has just gone out stand towards him?"

"Dear me, sir, that is an awkward question," said the landlord; "I never asked them any questions, not I."

"I should be obliged to you," said Morton, fully convinced that the man knew more, if he chose to acknowledge it, "to give me an explicit reply to my question. You will not injure yourself by so doing, but, on the contrary, perhaps benefit yourself. I take some interest in the young person who just now opened the door of the room where I was detained. Her father is a very faithful servant of mine, and an excellent man. I believe she is well-disposed herself, and I am afraid she has been ill-used by Mr. Latimer. Now, my only object in the questions I ask is to know her real situation, in order to make him do what is right by her, if possible, and if not, to restore her to her father."

"Oh, if that's all," exclaimed the landlord, "I can make you quite easy about that. They are to be married to-morrow at a quarter past nine. The banns will be published to-day for the third time, and I am to go with her to the church to-morrow to give her away. Mr. Latimer, when he went, left a note for the parson, appointing the time, and I dare say the young lady has gone to give it to him now."

Morton mused for a moment or two, and then inquired "Do you really think that Mr. Latimer intends to fulfill this engagement?"

"What, marry her? Oh dear, yes, sir, I am quite sure of that," was the gardener's reply. "Why he need not have had the banns called if he didn't; and why should he leave the note, and make her ask me to go with her? Besides, bless you, sir, he's very fond of her, though he does worry her now and then; and I'm sure she's as nice a young lady as ever I see."

"I trust it is as you say," replied Morton; "but nevertheless I shall take means to ascertain the facts, that if he do not fulfill his promise, measures may be taken both to punish him and to protect her. It may be as well," he continued, "when she returns not to tell her that we have had any conversation upon this subject; nor to say any thing about it to Mr. Latimer either. I will take what means I think fit, and act as I may find necessary. My hat, I think, is in the room up-stairs: be so good as to bring it to me."

The gardener obeyed with great alacrity, brushing the fine new beaver with his arm as he brought it down, and taking care to look into the hat to see if he could find any indication of the owner's name, style, or title. He discovered nothing, however, for Mr. Morton was not one of that class of men who write their names in their hats, and all he could conclude was that the gentleman was a gentleman, and quite as sane as himself.

"You will remember what I have told you," said Morton, covering his head, when the landlord came down, "and not speak about our conversation to any one. I shall probably remain here till after the hour appointed for the marriage to-morrow, and you shall hear from me again according to your conduct."

Thus saying, he walked out, passed through the garden, and entered the lane. There he paused for an instant, not very well knowing

which way to turn, for the walls on each side of the lane were high, and it was not till he had taken some twenty or thirty steps rather away from the town than towards it, that, on looking round at the sound of some voices, he perceived over one of the garden gates the weather-cock and part of the steeple of a church in the opposite direction, and, turning back, he walked at a quick pace up the lane again, when suddenly, at the turning near which the post-boy and the gardener had held their conference on the morning before, he perceived a body of four or five men advancing towards him. At the head of the party was a gentleman with a low-crowned hat, a pig-tail, and a pair of spectacles; and a large and ponderous body, with the capacious stomach covered with a very clean white waistcoat, carried on by a pair of diminutive legs, enveloped in drab breeches and gray worsted stockings. There was no mistaking Mr. Quatterly. Once seen he was known for ever, and it needed a telescope of no great power to identify him at several miles' distance.

Morton's face became certainly very joyful at the sight, and he walked straight up to his old friend, who did not recognize him, however, till he was within twenty yards. But as soon as he did, Mr. Quatterly, on the impulse of the moment, took off his hat, exposing his shining bald crown to the full light of the sun, and waved it over his head, exclaiming aloud, and totally forgetting that it was Sunday—"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! Here's little bo-peep, who went to sleep—my dear sir, how do you do! I declare that though, in regard to the poor man of Tobago, you may

'Imagine his bliss

When the doctor said this:

To a roast leg of mutton you may go.'

you cannot imagine my bias at seeing you a free man, delivered from the power of the enemy. Why, we heard that you had been arrested—detained in prison without bail, and treated with all the rigor of the law—without a *faisla*, a *cepias*, or any other writ, injunction or precept whatsoever; and here am I, with this worthy magistrate, two constables, and an assistant, ready to deliver you, should it be necessary, by *habeas corpus*."

"A thousand thanks, my dear sir," replied Morton; "but luckily no such measures will be necessary now. I am at liberty, as you see; and, although undoubtedly a most gross and scandalous outrage has been committed, yet some consideration may be necessary before we proceed to punish the offenders."

"One of them I will certainly punish," said Mr. Quatterly, "though not for this offence, my dear sir. I mean a certain Captain Tankerville, for I am determined that wild beast shall not go about the world any longer, and I will not quit this town till I have found him. I've got a string round his leg that he does not know of, and he shan't go far. As to the rest of the gentry, you can do as you think fit. I meddle with no man's charities, however absurd they may be. But now I think we had better adjourn to the inn, and discuss the matter; but first let me make you acquainted with this worshipful J. P."—and he introduced Morton in form to the magistrate who accompanied him, and who finding Othello's occupation

gone, now that the prisoner was at liberty, took his leave with his satellites as they passed the corner of his own street, leaving Mr. Morton and Mr. Quatterly to go on to the inn.

Morton's first anxiety was in regard to Louisa, but it was not till the worthy solicitor had rung for breakfast, and had ordered coffee, broiled ham, eggs, and toast, made sundry observations upon the unshaved state of his young friend's chin, and begun and broken off his story half a dozen times, that Morton discovered that he, Mr. Quatterly, having visited Mallington on the preceding night, could give him information upon the subject nearest his heart. As soon as he was aware of the fact, however, he himself broke through the thread of the worthy solicitor's narrative to inquire whether he had been to Mrs. Charlton's and seen Louisa.

"No, my dear sir, no," replied Mr. Quatterly; "but I did better than present the fair lady with the person of an old lawyer. I sent her an old doctor of divinity, for which I trust she is truly grateful. Set your mind at rest—set your mind at rest. Dr. Western went up to her immediately, to tell her you were quite safe, and I came over here to insure that the tale was true. She was in a sad quandary all day, I understand—and dreaming, I have no doubt, of nothing but throats cut, and gaping wounds, together with all the sundry associations of bludgeons, and pistols, and razors, and crow-bars; but the worthy doctor, doubtless, afforded her pleasanter visions for the night, and he will be over here himself in an hour or two, to co-operate with me in your liberation. I dare say he looks forward to somewhat too much work for the Sabbath; but like the friend of the celebrated Mrs. Hubbard, when she found the cupboard bare, 'the poor dog will get none'—and now to other things."

Mr. Quatterly then proceeded to entertain Mr. Morton with a variety of details, regarding both the affairs of that gentleman himself, those of his unfortunate clerk, Mr. Wilkins, and those of Captain Tankerville; and he ended, as breakfast was brought in, by expressing a hope that Morton had not been put to inconvenience by want of the sum which Wilkins had carried off, and which had, in fact, been destined for his use.

"As soon as I could make arrangements for trapping the fellow," he continued, "I set off post myself, with money in my pocket-book, deviating a little from my way to this town, information having reached me that my scamp had been seen at a village, about five miles off on the London road. He was gone, however, before I arrived, and I went on to Mallington at once; not, indeed, that it was absolutely necessary I should in person carry you the money; but I had other news to tell you, and good news too—I have every reason to believe, my dear sir, that the whole of our important affair is settled. I have done it, I think, by a *coup de maître*."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Morton. "How might that be, my dear sir? I know that you are very skillful in diplomacy, and learned in the law; but I did not expect that we should terminate this affair for three or four months to come, especially as we are in the long vacation."

"It was by no stroke of diplomacy," replied Mr. Quatterly, "nor by any legal process."

On the contrary, it was by a proceeding quite out of all rule, and contrary to every etiquette. I begged a conference with our opponents, but seemed particularly unwilling that your worthy cousin should be present, he being a principal, and you not being on the spot. In this I calculated on the natural obstinacy of the human beast, and I was successful, for he insisted upon being at the meeting himself, saying, that you might come up if you liked it. Well, I submitted with an ill grace. I, upon your part, sole and alone; he, accompanied by his solicitors, Messrs. Clearwink and Writham, and by their junior, Mr. Dasherbald. Had a clerk at my back, it is true, and an enormous blue bag. When there, I immediately addressed my legal brethren, pointing out my objection to principals being present; that was to throw the breach of all etiquette upon them; but they stoutly maintained your cousin's right to hear all that was said; so then I immediately proceeded to business. I told them that my sole object was to save him needless litigation and expense, as I knew that his fortune would ill bear it, while yours, though too ample to be affected by any costs, would be quite as well without them. Thereupon the cousin said that he was well aware you was a rich man, but that was no reason why you should deprive him of his rights, and that he would rather plead in *furna pauperis* than give them up. I replied, that it was especially to show his learned advisors, that he had no rights at all that I had requested the conference. Our case was so clear, I said, that I had come to make what the French lawyers call a *communication des pièces*, which would satisfy them that they had no case to carry into court. When they heard this, my fraternity would have given two or three fingers to get their principal out of the way; but that was not to be done, and, without giving them more time than enough, I produced an abstract of your title, comprising a list of all documents and proofs in our possession; and I could see our friend's countenance fall most sadly, as he heard me make out my case, step by step, leaving him not a leg to stand upon. Mr. Dasherbald was in a high state of irritation, protested against the irregularity of the whole proceeding, and appealed to my sense of professional etiquette, for he had an unpleasant foresight of losing the fees on sundry briefs, if the suit was nipped in the bud. I would neither be stopped nor squabble, but went on to the end, and then cited to my gentlemen two or three instances of their own irregularity, pointing out, moreover, that having consented to the conference, and insisted upon a principal being present, their demurrer came too late. My effect was produced, however. Though very unwilling to admit it, even to himself, your opponent saw that his case was hopeless; and the only question in his mind that I could see was, whether, out of spite, he should fight out a lost battle, and die in the field—if not in person, at least in fortune—or whether he should beat a retreat with what he had got left. Even the lawyers were a little staggered, for I had taken care to let them know that the sinews of war, on the part of the adversary, were less than they even themselves supposed; so that if their bill went beyond

a couple of thousand pounds, they were very likely to be minus the balance of account. I then said that, having shown them how the gentleman stood, it was for them to give him their best advice as to proceeding with a hopeless case, which, doubtless, they would not recommend. Mr. Dasherbald declared that he did not see the case was hopeless at all, and was proceeding in the same strain, when Clearwink pulled him by the sleeve, and said it might be better for them to confer apart. He then, having first whispered a word to Writham, retired with Dasherbald and Mr. Wilnot into another room; and Writham, setting his head on one side, with the insinuating look of a grey-haired bitch, told me, in the gentlest tone possible, that he feared the greatest difficulty would be about their costs. I said, in reply, that there would be great difficulty, I did not doubt, in getting them from Mr. Wilnot. He shrugged his shoulders, asked who they could look to, if not to him; and added that, under circumstances, he thought they must plead, to give a chance for the said costs. Thereupon, in the good plain vernacular, I asked him if he would have them now, or wait till he could get them. He winked his eye, and said he did not know whether he rightly comprehended me. I replied that you were a man who did not like trouble—hated lawsuits and lawyers, with a few brilliant exceptions—could easily calculate what the expenses of the case would be, if carried into court—knew perfectly well that no person in England can either get his rights, or keep them without paying for them—and, therefore, would, in all probability, be ready to make a sacrifice, rather than have all the annoyance of courts of chancery and houses of peers. After this the matter was all plain sailing: their bill was to be discharged by you, if satisfactory to me; and if not, referred to arbitration, for Writham would not consent to have it taxed, and, leaving me alone, he joined his partner and the rest very soon, bringing them back into the ring, but evidently with no intention of showing fight. To save their credit, some time for consideration was demanded, I handed them over the list of documents, and they are to let me have a definite answer as speedily as possible. It had not arrived when I set out after Wilkins, and I ordered it to follow me to Mallington without delay.

"And, pray, what is become of this clerk of yours?" asked Mr. Morton. "You say you caught him at Mallington, and that he seemed very penitent. What have you done with him?"

"Set him free upon parole," replied Mr. Quatterly. "Ah, I see you think it very extraordinary; but recollect, my dear friend, I never do anything like any other man, and such a course has this great advantage, that nobody ever knows where to have me. But this fellow has promised to ferret out for me our worthy friend, Captain Tankerville, who has squeezed him like a sponge under the grasp of his own fears. And now let us sit down to breakfast, after which you shall shave yourself, and we will go to church."

Morton very willingly agreed to the proposal in all its terms, though undoubtedly had he done what inclination prompted he would have set off for Mallington at once; but he was one

of those men who do not do always what inclination prompts, and now that he knew Louisa's mind had been relieved in regard to his fate, he thought it in some sort a duty to wait for Dr. Western's arrival in order to consult with him as to Lucy Edmonds. This he accordingly resolved to do, but time passed, and Dr. Western did not appear. The young gentleman and his solicitor breakfasted, went to church, returned, and waited till past five o'clock before the worthy clergyman reached the town.

Their time, indeed, was not wholly unoccupied, for when they came back from the morning service, they found Mr. Wilkins waiting for them, with the information that our highly-respected friend, Captain Tankerville, was at the inn somewhat further down the street, and that he had received one or two communications from a young man who came and went frequently between the place of his temporary domicile and a cottage just out of the town, which Morton and Mr. Quatterly instantly concluded must be that where the former had been detained. Mr. Quatterly's measures were immediately taken with his usual decision and rapidity. A magistrate was visited, information on oath filed against the worthy captain—not as an accessory after the fact to Mr. Wilkins' robbery, not as an accessory before the fact to Mr. Morton's abduction, but as a principal in having affixed other people's names to certain documents, greatly to his benefit and their loss. A warrant was at once made out, and Captain Tankerville was conveyed from a pint of sherry and a mutton chop, which he considered no bad luncheon, to the town jail, which he looked upon as an indifferent lodging.

At length, however, Dr. Western appeared, and great was his satisfaction in every respect to find his young friend at liberty without any of the steps which had been anticipated. After having satisfied him in regard to Louisa, he listened with deep interest to all that Morton had to say regarding Lucy Edmonds, and agreed to wait and be present himself in church next morning in order to ascertain whether the marriage between her and Alfred Latimer did or did not take place. Mr. Quatterly determined to remain also to look after his sheep-fold, as he termed the prison where Captain Tankerville was confined; but Morton resolved to see her he loved as early as possible on the following morning, and, consequently, after having partaken of dinner with his two friends, he set out once more in a post-chaise to Mallington towards half-past seven o'clock, calculating upon reaching that place by ten. But human calculations are all in vain. The chaise, having had more traveling than it approved of, broke down about seven miles from Mallington, and Morton had to sleep at a small public-house in the first village he could meet with, after walking some miles on foot; he did not even reach this shelter till it was past eleven o'clock, and consequently judged it much too late to go on and present himself at Mallington House.

CHAPTER LIX.

We must now turn for a while to Mallington House, and to one whom we have neglected

somewhat sadly of late, although, to say the truth, there is no person on the scene in whom we take a deeper interest; but, as in nature, so in a tale, true or false, if nature be its guide, the inferior, the less interesting, the more insignificant, and the more unworthy characters, work out the fate of the higher and the nobler; and, by tortuous, minute, and often despicable means, produce great and important results, affecting persons and events apparently far beyond their reach and scope. Thus the coral insects, with their minute architecture, raise up, from the bottom of the deep Pacific Sea, whole clusters of islands, speedily inhabited by human beings, amongst whom, at no distant date, civilization is destined to flourish, and the crowning gift to be added—the knowledge of God, and the faith in the Savior. The whole human family is in fact so linked together that no one can tell how the actions of the lowest or the most remote can affect those high in station or distant by space, and as the great machine runs more smoothly on small castors than on great wheels, I have thought fit to dwell a great deal upon minor things, which, nevertheless, were not without their ultimate importance.

Yet Louisa Charlton—sweet Louisa Charlton—I return to her with pleasure, and could pause long without unwillingness, either to paint her on that eventful Saturday morning; first, as she sat and watched eagerly for Morton's return with her soft and beautiful eyes often directed towards the common from the windows of the drawing-room, and, with a graceful start, listened to any accidental sound below in hopes that it denoted his arrival; or when his long absence caused serious alarm in the whole family, to depict the struggle in her mind, the anguish, the anxiety, she felt, often corrected and subdued by the trust in God, and the chastening powers of religion. I could dwell upon all the painful emotions of her heart, all the dreadful images that terror suggested, all the dull and heavy vacancy that the very thought of losing him whom only she loved produced in her bosom. I could willingly tell, too, how she strove for calmness, how she succeeded in suppressing any vehement expression of sorrow and alarm, and how she suggested various means that others had not thought of for discovering Morton's fate.

But pictures of this kind are not always pleasant to the reader, and it may be only necessary to state that towards evening, Louisa's grief and anxiety were considerably aggravated by the demeanor of her step-mother. Mrs. Charlton herself was both extremely apprehensive and considerably annoyed at the unexplained absence of Mr. Morton. She felt really alarmed lest any serious evil should have befallen him—not in the slightest degree upon his account, but entirely upon her own. He was one of the materials which she had used in constructing and bringing to perfection a scheme which she had long nourished; and the porcelain manufacturer could not be more provoked—indeed, not half so much so, at seeing a cup or vase which he had painted with the greatest delicacy crack to pieces in the firing, than Mrs. Charlton was at the bare idea of Morton getting himself murdered at the very moment when she intended to make use of him. He might have been

hanged, shot, or had his throat cut without calling forth anything whatsoever from Mrs. Charlton but the simple exclamation of "Dear me, how unfortunate!" had it not been that she had determined on that very Saturday to bring matters to a crisis, and, Mr. Morton being abstracted from the sum total of events that she had counted upon, her whole calculations were thrown out. Nor was there any possibility of arranging and executing a new scheme within any reasonable time; and, besides the ruins of the old one were, like most other ruins, likely to present a great obstruction to any other scheme at all. Louisa, she saw, was evidently in love with Morton, and she knew too well that she was not a person easily to love again. Besides, where could she hope for such facilities? One of Louisa's guardians had been the very person to introduce the two young people to each other, and his co-executor and fellow-guardian, except in matters of accounts, was entirely ruled by Dr. Western; so that every difficulty had been smoothed down, and Mrs. Charlton had anticipated nothing but a gentle acquiescence in her wishes, as soon as they were delicately propounded to Mr. Morton, in conjunction with the information that his marriage with Louisa entirely depended upon her good will and pleasure. All these gay dreams, however, were scattered and tossed about by the disappearance of Mr. Morton, and the fair lady of Mallington House worked herself into a high state of irritation before dinner was set upon the table. Louisa's external calmness, too, served but to aggravate such feelings, and she took the very first opportunity in the course of the evening of venting her anger upon her unoffending step-daughter. Whatever Louisa had replied would not have made any difference in Mrs. Charlton's conduct, for she was determined that the young lady should be resolved to offend her, and she was offended accordingly. Having worked herself up into a high and mighty passion, she proclaimed a headache, and retired to her own dressing-room, where the scene took place with Mrs. Windsor, which we have already depicted.

In the meantime Louisa turned over in her own mind all that she had said, and examined it strictly, but found that not one word had been uttered by her which could reasonably call forth anger. Then, with a conscience void of offence, she cast the subject from her mind, and turned her thoughts to the still more painful and serious subject of contemplation afforded by Morton's continued absence. In solitude and silence—with no one to comfort, with nothing to re-assure, with no object to divert her attention—the feelings of her heart had nearly overpowered her. The tears did rise into her eyes; a drop or two had flowed over, and rested on her soft cheek, and she was struggling to keep the flood from pouring down, when the servant announced Dr. Western, and Louisa started up with hope and terror, which always walk hand in hand through the dim vale of uncertainty. The expression of the good rector's face, however, at once relieved her. There was a bright and joyful smile upon it, such as she knew his kind heart could not give, unless the tidings he bore were happy. She saw that he was the mes-

senger of peace, and his first words proved it likewise.

"I have got good news, my love," he said; "and I am glad to find you alone, for they are for your ear only. Morton is quite well, and safe;" and he went on to tell her all that he thought necessary, remembering, however, the good solicitor's caution, and not saying more than was required to set her heart at rest.

Louisa was easily satisfied. We must not say that she was not anxious to hear all the circumstances—that she had no curiosity—that she did not ask some questions—for, of course, the subject was an interesting one to her, but still she knew Dr. Western so well that she was sure that nothing on earth would induce him to give her hopes of Morton's safety, unless he was safe, or to conceal the facts from her without necessity. He told her, too, where her lover was, and mentioned his own intention of going over the following day; but the rest of their conversation would not be very interesting if detailed here, being soon after interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Windsor, and turning, after she retired again, upon the character and conduct of that good lady herself.

"She's an old, and, I believe, a faithful servant of your family," said Dr. Western, after some discussion of the circumstances, "and unless you find that she has been really insolent to Mrs. Charlton, I can see no reason, my dear child, why you should not take her into your family when you have a house of your own—that is to say, if you desire it. But you had better inquire into the circumstances fully before you decide."

Louisa mused, for she was not quite certain of Mrs. Windsor, and, after remaining a short time longer, Dr. Western took his leave, and departed.

The next day passed. Louisa was cheerful from renewed hope; Mrs. Charlton was in a languid and somewhat dolorous mood. She lay upon her sofa in her dressing-room the whole morning, in the patience-on-a-monument style, and Louisa went to church by herself. Her step-mother called her a selfish unfeeling girl, but the words were not addressed to Louisa's ear, and would not have pained her much if she had heard them. At dinner Mrs. Charlton treated her coldly, and somewhat repulsively, but yet she could not help fancying, from her step-daughter's calmness, that she must have some assurance of Morton's safety, which was a comfort to herself also. A little after ten she retired to rest, giving a hint both to Louisa and the servants that, as agitation and apprehension had rendered her somewhat unwell, she wished the rest of the family to retire likewise, and to have the house kept quite silent.

Though by no means disposed to sleep, for Dr. Western had given her some hope of Morton's return that night, or on the following morning, Louisa willingly enough went to her own room, which her father had taken care should be fitted up with every comfort and convenience. She there sat reading and listening alternately till all hope of Morton's coming that night was over; and even afterwards, as the book she had taken up interested her, she went on with its perusal, leaning her fair head upon her hand, and mingling the thoughts of the author with

her own. The clock struck twelve; all was silent around, and it seemed the hour of all others to sit and read by the solitary lamp the pouring forth of a high spirit long passed away from earth. She continued some time longer, then, but as she felt it growing late she rose in about half an hour to seek her pillow, and only paused to look out from the window, the curtains of which were withdrawn, and gazed for a moment at the starlight sky. As she did so some sound from below, as of a person leaping the garden wall, made her look down, and she saw the figure of a man moving on the gravel walk. The next instant he stooped down, rose again, and threw some small pebbles against her window, and the moment after, as she was drawing back in some alarm, she heard a voice pronounce her name.

There was something about the figure which reminded her of Mrs. Charlton's son, and yet it seemed very different too, but the voice was, undoubtedly, his; and she came nearer to the window again, and once more looked out. She had no longer any doubt. It was certainly Alfred Latimer, though, it seemed, in very strange attire; and as soon as by the light in the room he perceived that she was again at the window, he made signs to her to open it, which, after a momentary hesitation, she did.

"Louisa," he said, in a low voice—"Louisa, come down, and open the door, there's a dear sister; I want to get in."

His tone and whole manner was agitated and wild; and Louisa replied, "I will call one of the servants, Alfred, and bid them let you in a minute."

"On no account!" he exclaimed; "if you won't take the trouble to come down, and let me in yourself, say so at once, and I will go away again; but I wish no one to know that I am here to-night. Will you open it, or will you not?"

His tone was so sharp and menacing that Louisa felt some alarm, though she knew not well what injury he could do her if she did as he desired; but yet she hesitated a little, till reflecting that the butler slept on the ground floor, at no great distance from the door, and that the bell-rope of a large bell, which would speedily alarm the whole house, hung close by, she replied at length, "Well, wait a moment, and I will come down, Alfred."

"And you will wake no one!" he said in a tone which seemed to her mingled with apprehension.

"No," she replied; "if you do not wish it, I will not."

"There's a good girl," was the answer; "be quick, be quick, Louisa;" and, taking a candle from the table, she descended to the garden door, withdrew the chain, and unlocked it, still keeping near the bell; and then, turning the handle of the lock, threw it back.

The instant the door was opened Alfred Latimer came in, snatched the candle from her hand, and saying in a low tone, "That will do, that will do. Thank you, Louisa," he walked straight up-stairs.

Louisa stood confounded.

His face, usually florid, was as pale as death; his eyes were wild and haggard; his hand shook so that it could scarcely hold the candlestick;

and his dress was no less strange than his manner. He had no hat on, and over his other clothing was drawn a smock frock, stained and dirty; and as Louisa watched him up the stairs she saw that the singular costume was completed by a pair of common leather leggings, such as those usually worn by gamekeepers and hedgers and ditchers. She had no time to observe more; but with a suspicion that he had become deranged in intellect—an event which she had often dreaded, from his wild and irregular course of life, she returned to her room, and instantly locked the door. Not above two or three minutes passed, and she was still sitting on the little sofa before her table, endeavoring to recover from the agitation into which these events had cast her, when some one turned the handle of the lock. Then came a knock, and, approaching the door, she inquired, "What is it? I cannot open the door now. I am going to bed."

"Put down your ear to the keyhole, then," said the voice of Alfred Latimer; and when she had done so, he added, in a stern tone, "Not a word to any one of my having been here, upon your life." Thus saying he turned away, and she could hear him go down stairs, open and close the door, and go out. She would not approach the window again, however, even to shut it, till she was certain that he was at a distance; but his retreating step soon died away upon the gravel walk, and, pulling down the sash, she retired to bed.

CHAPTER LX.

THE constable to whom the apprehension of Captain Tankerville had been confided was a man of a peculiar conformation, both mental and corporeal. In figure he was short, fat, and squat; and the only indications of activity which his body displayed were to be found in the neat well-set leg and foot, which, in their clean stocking and highly-polished shoe, were usually displayed to full advantage. His arms were short but powerful, and furnished with a tremendous fist at the end, which, when once it got a grasp of anything, fixed upon it with iron rigidity, and it employed upon the face of an adversary brought at least double the space under its operation than could be covered by any other mortal fist. The mind was not altogether unlike the body; it had its points of obtuseness and rotundity, but at the same time it was a most vehemently active and energetic mind, and though, from a degree of fatness and heaviness, in particular respects, it often operated in a wrong direction, it was sure to go on with miraculous rapidity on any road it thought fit to follow. Often its speed and vehemence brought the worthy constable into situations which would have been extremely dangerous to other men, but nine times out of ten he carried himself out of a scrape with the same celerity which had carried him into one, and though a magistrate had often to look grave at his overstepping his authority, yet Mr. Higginthorp generally discovered in two minutes some circumstance whereby to justify his so doing.

When Mr. Morton had been gone about half an hour, and Dr. Western and Mr. Quibbly

were quietly seated over a cup of tea, discussing the merits of their friend just departed, and the relative qualities of sweet Louisa Charlton. Mr. Higginthorp suddenly presented himself before them, and advancing to the tea-table, leaned his enormous knuckles upon it, saying, "I've nabbed the other fellow, your worships, and want to know what I'm to do with him."

Dr. Western and Mr. Quatterly stared at each other and then at the constable—"What other fellow!" demanded Mr. Quatterly.

"Why, the 'complee," replied the constable. "The accusatory arter the fact."

"Who do you mean? who do you mean?" exclaimed the solicitor. "Who killed Cock Robin?"

"Can't say, sir," answered Mr. Higginthorp; "but this here fellow is him as was a coming and going arter the captain we've got in limbo. He says his name's John Blackmore; but I'd bet a dollar to a tenpenny nail that's an alias."

"In the name of fortune!" exclaimed Mr. Quatterly, "what did you nab him for, as you call it?"

"Oh, bless ye, sir! I always nabs 'em all," said Mr. Higginthorp; "we never can tell what may come out, and it makes all sure. It's seldom a man undertakes any of these jobs single-handed, there's most always a gang on 'em; so when I've nabbed one as I'm sure on, I nabs all that have been speaking to him particklar for four-and-twenty hours. Then, if nothing comes out it can't be helped, and there's no harm done, you know."

"But there is harm done, Mr. Conetable," replied Mr. Quatterly. "Why—devil take it!—you've got no warrant against him."

"Can't help that, sir," said Mr. Higginthorp, with a low bow; "it's what I always does. It's the rule here."

"The deuce it is!" said Mr. Quatterly, "but suppose this fellow prosecutes you for false imprisonment?"

"He can't do that, sir," rejoined the constable.

"What, when there's neither any warrant against him nor any information lodged?" asked the solicitor.

"No, sir," answered the constable; "I lodge my own information, and executes my own warrant. I always does, and if so be as how it should turn out that he has had nothing to do with t'other job, why, you see, as I caught him a-playing at cards on a Sunday in a public—he's jo for that, that's all."

"Pon my life, you seem very well contented with your proceedings," rejoined the solicitor, "and put me greatly in mind of a certain Jack Horner, who

'Put in his thumb,
And pulled out a plum,
And said what a good boy am I.'

We don't do these things in London, Master Constable."

"That's a pity, sir," said Mr. Higginthorp, perfectly content with his own proceedings; "but what I want to know now is what I'm to do with him."

"Pon my life I can't tell," replied Mr. Quatterly. "You are the best judge. Where is he?"

"Down stairs, in charge of my sub," replied

Mr. Higginthorp. "Shall I bring him up? Would you like to see him? He's not a bad specimen of the thing."

"Why, perhaps you had better," answered Mr. Quatterly, after a moment's consideration. "What do you think, my reverend friend! This is the fellow, I suppose, who was coming and going between that pitiful swindler, Tankerville, and your acquaintance Latimer."

"That's just it, sir," said the constable; "you've hit it, my buck; and, as for the matter of that, I shouldn't wonder if he could tell us where Latimer's to be found, so that we could nab him, too."

"On no account," exclaimed Mr. Quatterly; "there's no charge against him that I know, except that he's a fool."

"Better nab 'em all, sir," said the constable, "never can tell what may come out."

"Pooh!" replied Mr. Quatterly; and Dr. Western proceeded to ask "Pray what did you say was his name?"

"Why, as to that, I knows nothing," answered the constable. "He calls himself John Blackmore, your worship; but that's an alias, I'm sure. That cock won't fight."

"Why, I can tell you in a moment," replied Dr. Western, "whether he be John Blackmore or not."

"I'll bring him up, I'll bring him up," replied the constable, with his usual rapidity, and in an instant he was out of the room and down stairs.

"If this be the same youth that I mean," said Dr. Western, "he is, I am sorry to say, a very unworthy and profligate lad."

"Then he will not be the worse for a night's solitary confinement," replied Mr. Quatterly; but, before he could add more, young John Blackmore himself was brought into the room in the custody of Mr. Higginthorp, and a tall long-necked assistant. His face was as white as a sheet, for, like many another man, though he had the courage to commit bad actions, his resolution failed him at once under their consequences. The sight of Dr. Western, too, did not at all tend to reassure him, for he was well aware that throughout the whole of the past, the record was against him, so that those who knew most of his previous history were likely to judge most unfavorably of his present conduct.

"I am sorry to see you in your present situation, John," said the worthy doctor; but Mr. Quatterly, before he could proceed further, pulled him by the sleeve, whispering, "Let him say what he likes; as we have no intention of proceeding against him, there cannot be any harm in suffering him to commit himself. Now, sir," he continued, speaking aloud; "what do you know of this matter?" and he bent his eyes sternly upon the youth's countenance, looking at him through his spectacles as if they were two microscopes which could pry into his heart.

John Blackmore hesitated and stammered, endeavoring to gain time for thought by asking in a voice naturally feeble and womanish, "What matter, sir?"

"Don't squeak like a sucking pig, but speak out, sir," replied Mr. Quatterly, in a rough tone.

"What matter! the whole matter to be sure—give an account of yourself for the last six

weeks—it's your only chance, I can tell you, so speak the truth, if you can do such a thing, and tell me how many of these jobs you've had to do with, and all about them."

"I declare, upon my honor and conscience," replied John Blackmore, "I've had nothing to do with anything at all, but the bringing Mr. Morton here, and getting the boat for them when they took away Lucy Edmonds; and then I didn't know it was against her will or I wouldn't have done it."

"Ah!" said Dr. Western; but Mr. Quatterly interposed, replying, "Well, we'll talk of other things afterwards. Tell us about these two bad affairs, and, if you speak truly and sincerely, perhaps I may stand your friend."

The young man hesitated, and then said, "Why as to Miss Lucy, she went against her will. That's the fact, and there's no denying it, for I heard Jack Williams say that when they first met her as she was walking home she gave a bit of a scream and refused to go with them, so that there was as much force as coaxing in the affair, and I myself saw them when they had got her across the water, carry her more than anything else. I was not very near, 'tis true, for I was only looking out to take the boat back, but I could see that she wasn't at all willing, and went more like a dead thing than a living one."

"Poor child, poor child!" said Dr. Western. "This is a very serious business, my good doctor," said Mr. Quatterly. "What do you know more of the affair, young man?"

"I know nothing more of that," replied John Blackmore, "because I had rightly nothing to do with it, except borrowing the boat for them; but as to the other business, why I did go up to the gentleman when he was waiting on the common, just because Mr. Latimer asked me; and he went on to give all the particulars, of which the reader is already aware, and with which Mr. Quatterly and Dr. Western had been previously made acquainted by the account of Mr. Morton himself. The youth added nothing to the information which they already possessed, except the fact of his having been sent over on the preceding night to give information to Alfred Latimer, that both what he had done and the place where he was to be found were known, and that the magistrates were coming over with all speed. Mr. Quatterly tried dexterously to extract from him some further particulars, but it was in vain; and Dr. Western thought this somewhat irregular examination at an end, when Mr. Quatterly suddenly inquired, "Well, now about the other business, what do you know of that?"

John Blackmore, who had somewhat recovered his color as he went on, turned once more as white as a sheet; but he replied, in a low, though in an indistinct voice, that he knew nothing about it—that he was quite innocent—that he had had nothing to do with it; and though it was quite evident, from his terror and agitation, that he was not, at all events, guiltless of all criminal knowledge, it was in vain that Mr. Quatterly labored to make him speak the truth. The youth, indeed, was amazingly frightened at the idea of a halter, and had no idea of putting his neck into one by anything he might himself say. He was, therefore, as mate

as a fish upon the subject of Mr. Quatterly's inquiries; and at length that gentleman, finding that he could gain nothing further from him, exclaimed, with an awful look, "Remember, you are throwing away your only chance. Will you speak, or will you not?"

The youth remained silent, and the worthy solicitor turned to the constable's assistant, saying, "Take him away, man with the long neck; but keep him safe below, while I speak with Mr. Higginthorp here."

John Blackmore was then removed, and turning quickly to the constable, the worthy solicitor demanded, "Well, Higginthorp, what do you intend to do with him now?"

"Poke him in the black hole, at all events," answered Mr. Higginthorp.

"I think you had better not," said Mr. Quatterly, with a warning shake of the head.

"Ay, but I will, though," rejoined the sturdy constable. "I'll tell you what, he's a bad un, that's clear, and I'm thinking as how he knows a trifle more than he says. So you see a touch of the solitary, no prog, and a cup of cold water, may bring it all out; and as for the rest I'll write him down in the book as one who was caught in the act of playing at cards in a public on a Sunday night. Then, if he says nothing, it can't be helped no how, and he'll be all the better for a little time to think. I've a great mind to put the darbies on him, just to take him down a bit. But he goes into the black hole any how, so there's no saying nothing against it."

"Well, you must do as you think fit about that," replied Mr. Quatterly. "The solitary, as you call it, mayn't be a bad punishment, if you can prove he's been playing at cards to-night."

"Competent witnesses," said the constable dryly. "Bless ye, sir, a night in the straw will do him all manner of good—good night, gentlemen. If I hear any more to-morrow morning early, I will favor you with it," and thus saying, he made his bow and walked out to execute his purpose.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE night was dark, the moon had gone down, the sky showed not a star, when Alfred Latimer, jumping into the gig which Williams had left at the gate, drove away with him on the road towards Mallington. At first they went very slow, for the lanes at the back of the town were somewhat intricate, and the obscurity which pervaded the whole air rendered it somewhat difficult to make their way on in safety without lights. Neither of them spoke a word, for Williams was naturally taciturn, except when possessed by the wild and eager spirit of adventure, which, in the intervals between conception and execution, would sometimes break forth in descriptions full of a rude but powerful eloquence. Alfred Latimer, too, had plenty of matter for thought, and, to say the truth, his heart was as dark and cheerless as the night air through which he passed. Bankrupt in purse and reputation—contemned by those who might have loved and esteemed him—alienated from those classes of society in which he was born to move—cut off from all

chance of raising himself above that rank from which he had chosen his companions—hopeless of bettering his condition, or of improving his means, but by adding crime to vice—with nothing to look back upon in the past but wasted advantages, opportunities neglected, evil passions pampered and indulged, warnings rejected, counsels refused, and even examples slighted—with ought to hope for in the future, but a wild life of feverish pleasure, mingled with the daily peril, and the intervals of sickly lassitude,—he was going to take the first profound plunge into the dark ocean of crime, and to render the whole of the rest of life not only full of remorse, but of apprehension. Thoughtless, rash, unprincipled as he was, he could not but feel such things, and that feeling kept him silent.

At length they issued forth, and were whirled more rapidly along the road, when they had quitted the precincts of the town. The air breathed freer around them, when no longer within the walls and hedges, and the faint indistinct outline of the open country sloping up towards the hills that lay between them and Malington, could just be caught by the eye. It seemed to Alfred Latimer like the prospect before him—dark, indistinct, and gloomy, with some shadowy traces of great things, he knew not what, rising in the vague distance, to the eye of fancy. His heart felt chilled and cold, for every man has his moments of remorse—moments when a stern conviction of the excellence, the peace, the joyfulness of that virtue which we have cast away, is forced upon us in sad and solemn contrast with a sickening loathing of the vices we have cherished. A consciousness that we are wallowing in the mire, when there are clearer streams at hand, comes from time to time upon every one who has abandoned right for wrong. Such was the case with Alfred Latimer, and though he was of all men the least inclined to indulge in anything like remorse, yet for the time the voice would be heard, the immortal spirit would speak—the tongue of conscience would not be silenced. The images of his earlier days rose up before him, whether he would or not. He thought of what he might have been—of what happiness, brightness, honor, might have surrounded his path. Memory ran back over the years gone by up to his very early youth. He recollected his mother's marriage with Mr. Charlton, and all the wild dreams of riotous indulgence with which he had pampered his fancy at the thought of her having the command of the old man's wealth. What might not that wealth have done for him! he now asked himself. It might have secured him advancement in every way, success in every pursuit, good education, a fair start in life, support at any moment of difficulty, and he could not but feel that it was he himself who had cast away all such things, and bitterly regret that he had done so. I say he felt it, not that he thought it. It was an impression—the operation of the heart more than of the mind, of the spirit more than of the intellect; and whenever he found that he was deviating into what he considered the weakness of remorse, he forced his thoughts to take the burden off his own shoulders, and cast it upon others. "Ay," he said mentally, "that old man always hated me. He might have done a real deal for me

if he had liked, and if he had been a little kinder I might have been a very different person from what I am." He forgot that Mr. Charlton had been a great deal kinder than he deserved, that he found him incurably rash, headstrong, and passionate. "Yes, it is all his fault," he continued, pondering over the past. "If I hadn't known that he had hated me I dare say I should have been inclined to do everything that people wished; but he's gone to the devil now, and I dare say he's paying for it, a hard miserly old hound—not to leave me a penny, and to leave it to my mother only for her life. A few thousand pounds, that he never would have missed, would have quite set me up just now." He forgot that had he possessed them they would have all been gone long before, for there is nothing but beggary for the spendthrift.

Still, however, he brooded, and still dark regret and sorrow would make themselves felt, and the consciousness of having been a fool and a scoundrel hung vaguely over him, keeping him in gloomy silence as they rolled along, till the horse began to slacken his pace as the road wound slowly up the hill, and at length his companion spoke, remarking, "You are devilish silent, Mr. Latimer!"

"So are you, Williams," replied Alfred Latimer.

"Ay, but it's my nature, but not yours," answered Jack Williams; "and I was thinking that perhaps, after all, you may not like this job. Now, I'm not fond of having to do with waverers."

"I'll tell you what, Jack Williams," replied the young man, in a low, stern, determined tone, "I'm in that sort of way just now that I'd shoot my own father for a thousand pounds."

"No need of that," replied Jack Williams carelessly, "nor your mother either. You can get more than that without shooting any one. However, I see you are up to the thing, that's something. It's no very difficult affair after all; and once it's done, and the white coast of England left far behind us, we may lead a life such as men lived in old days, and put the wide blue sea under contribution. I know a place where I've left one that's very dear to me, in a deep cove of which, all surrounded by high blue hills, one could hide away a man of war as easily as I could hide a hazel nut in my hand. All that we shall want, however, is a good schooner and a gallant crew. There are some twenty or thirty fellows thereabout, some doing one thing, some another, who would be glad enough to come to my whistle, and many more will join us. Then we'll make our own laws, Mr. Latimer, and keep to them; and better a great deal will they be than all the long rigmaroles that a set of gabbling fools pass in what they call parliament. We've no need of all such long stories. Half a dozen simple rules will be quite enough for us, for that's a rich and beautiful country, and plenty of room for men to live amongst the orange groves and olive trees without running their heads against each other, and we'll be at peace amongst ourselves, and at war with all the rest of the world. I don't know a finer thing than on the clear starlight nights of that part of the world to stand either upon the deck or upon one of the high rocks, and look out over the glistening sea for

a white sail with a rich freight aboard. Then after her, like a swallow after a fly, and haul her colors down and bring her into port."

The vision that he called up was just what was wanted to rouse Alfred Latimer from the regret and remorse which had begun to take possession of him, and during the next two or three miles he and his companion continued to talk upon such pleasant themes till gradually their conversation reverted to the present, and the scheme which they were about to execute was now first fully made known to Alfred Latimer. At another moment, perhaps, there might have been something in the whole affair which would have shocked those few better feelings that still lingered in his heart; but despair, and the disastrous state of his circumstances, and the wild vision of a free and adventurous life of enjoyment which had been just presented to his imagination, all combined together to smother everything like doubt and hesitation, and render him more eager for the perpetration of the act, only apprehensive lest it should fail.

"It's no great harm taking all this stuff," said Williams, after they had talked the matter over, "for nobody knows to whom it belongs, and most likely the wrong person would get it after all, or else it would go among those old lawyers."

"I don't care whom it belongs to," replied Alfred Latimer, sharply. "I must have it, at least my share of it, and that is all I shall think of. Men have no right to hoard up money and plate, and all that sort of stuff, and keep it shut up in an old house, of no use to anybody, when there are a hundred around that want it."

If he could have seen Williams's face he would have perceived a smile upon his lip, but the night was too dark for that; and, without entering further into the abstract right of people who have nothing to rob people who have something, the other went on to say, "it will be much better, if we can, to turn all that we take into money, that we may not have to lumber ourselves with plate."

"Ay, but how is that to be done?" asked Alfred Latimer.

"Oh! there are ways and means," answered Williams; "and I sent word to a fellow in London, who, a good many years ago, used to take game and venison, and such things, off my hands, and who's now as rich as a Jew, to come down, and bring plenty of money with him, for I had got something to dispose of. I gave him a hint of the sum that would be needed, too, so he'll come prepared, and I think we had better stop to-night at the place where he's likely to be found if he's arrived yet."

"Where's that?" answered Alfred Latimer, knowing very well that on the road back to Mallington there was but one public-house, and that it, though a poor place, bore a very respectable character.

"Why, at Mr. Gatton's to be sure," replied Williams.

"Why, not the great inn, the Bell, at Sturton?" exclaimed Alfred Latimer.

"Ay, ay," said Williams; "there are more things done at that inn than you know of. Besides, he travels quite like a gentleman, and has got his own little goods cart, marked on the back, 'Moses Lövi, draper, Burton-on-Trent.'"

Alfred Latimer laughed, and thought it a very good joke. But yet, as the Bell at Sturton was the largest inn in the neighborhood, to which the principal people of the county resorted, he could not conceive that the well-known Jack Williams would be a welcome guest to the worthy landlord. Nevertheless, there are more things between heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any man's philosophy, and so it proved in this instance.

It was about two o'clock when they drove into the yard of the Bell, but they still found the people of the house up, for there had been a club dinner there that day, and some of the respectable inhabitants, half muddled with wine, were still engaged in playing at cards in a room up-stairs. The landlord himself was in the bar, a stout, well-made, hawk-faced man; and when Williams and his companion entered, after having given the horses and gig into the hands of the ostler, the worthy host nodded to the sailor, as to an old acquaintance, displaying no sign of unwillingness at seeing him, except a shrewd glance up the passage, to ascertain who might be there besides.

"Pray, Mr. Gatton," said Williams, "has Mr. Levi come here to-day?"

The landlord nodded again, and the other went on to inquire, "Is he in bed yet?"

"No," answered Mr. Gatton, "he's up-stairs, number twenty-three."

Williams thanked him for the information; and was turning away to seek the room indicated, when the landlord exclaimed, "Williams, Williams, I want to speak with you;" and then added, in a low tone, when the other approached nearer, "I wish you could get me a dozen more of those handkerchiefs."

"You shall have them," said Williams, with a significant look; and once more resuming his course, he led Alfred Latimer up two pair of stairs, and then along the corridor, examining the numbers over the doors as they passed. At number twenty-three he knocked, and a voice from within said in a sort of abstracted tone "Come in," upon which the two gentlemen entered. The name of Moses Levi had suggested to the imagination of Alfred Latimer the figure of a little fat, dirty, bleary-eyed Jew, with all the characteristics of the Hebrew race—the large hooked nose, the wide obtuse-angled mouth, the large ear, and the sallow complexion—strongly developed in his countenance. What was his surprise, then, to behold a tall well-proportioned and good-looking man of about forty-eight or fifty, dressed with scrupulous neatness, and having, besides the respectable brown coat, drab breeches, and gaiters, which might become a trader well to do in the world, a green silk handkerchief tied neatly round his throat, over the collar of a shirt white as driven snow. He was seated at a table, with a small bowl beside him, from which probably issued the strong odor of punch with which the air of the room was impregnated. But he was not alone occupied in sipping from time to time the nectar of the bowl—though a wine-glass and ladle that appeared by his side showed that such was his occasional recreation. An inkstand was nearer to him than the bowl, and a neat looking, apparently well-kept note-book was open before him, over which he bent, pen in hand, seemingly cal-

culating his well-gotten gains. So busily was he employed that he did not look up till Williams and his companion were far in the room, but he then raised his face towards them, displaying very handsome features, though not without that peculiar, keen, and cunning look generally displayed by the race from which he sprung.

"Ah, Jack!" he cried, starting up and shaking Williams heartily by the hand, "I am glad to see you. Why we haven't met I don't know how long. This is a friend of yours, I suppose."

"Mr. Latimer," said Williams, introducing the two to each other, and Mr. Levi bowed and scraped as ceremoniously as an ambassador.

"Come, sit down, gentlemen," said Mr. Moses Levi. "We'll have some more glasses and some punch, and then we'll talk of business."

The glasses and punch were brought, and Alfred Latimer took a liberal supply, while Williams helped himself more carefully, and, after a few words upon ordinary subjects, Mr. Levi proceeded as follows:—"Well, Mr. Williams, I got your message, and, though it was rather inconvenient for me, I came down at once, because I know you never disappoint one—I suppose this gentleman is one of us, though I don't know him."

"All right," said Williams. "Have you got the money with you?"

"Why, not the whole sum," replied the Jew. "I hadn't got as much in the house. Why, five or six thousand pounds is a great amount, you know—what a job it must be!"

"How much have you brought?" asked Williams.

"Why, somewhere near upon three thousand pounds," answered his London friend.

"That won't do," replied Williams, who knew his man. "If you haven't got the whole you may as well go back again."

"Ay, but that will do to pay part," rejoined Levi; "and you can touch the rest in London, you know."

"It won't do, Moses," reiterated the other, with a shake of the head. "We must make a finish of it all at once. So if you are not ready, I must send to Solomons."

"No, no, no," cried Mr. Levi. "Don't be so hasty, Jack; if I haven't got the money with me I can get it in five minutes. I never need to send to London for money, when there's a banker in the town."

"Yes, but Sunday is coming on," said Williams, "and we must have it paid all in gold."

"Well, well, that can be done," said his respectable friend. "Leave all that to me. The money shall be ready in the twinkling of an eye."

"In short, you've got it with you, Moses, that's the fact," was Williams's very just rejoinder.

Mr. Levi did not absolutely admit the fact, but turned to another branch of the subject, saying, "If you have it in guineas, you know you must take them at their price."

"That's six-and-twenty shillings," observed Williams; but Levi exclaimed eagerly, "Seven-and-twenty, upon my life. I'll show you the invoice of the last I sent to France," and he drew out a pocket-book, from which he took a paper confirming his assertion, for he had always

means at hand of proving the truth of any lie he chose to tell.

Williams had nothing prepared to rebut this evidence, and that matter was accordingly settled, after which Mr. Moses Levi asked in a low and insinuating tone, "Have you got the goods with you?"

"Oh dear, no," replied Williams coolly. "I must fetch them first from the other side of the county, but we must have everything settled, that there may be no stopping to talk about prices."

"What sort of stuff is it?" inquired Mr. Levi, thoughtfully.

"Why, all gold and silver plate, and a good many little things I shall keep," answered Williams. "Rings and trinkets, and such things."

"Well, you know the prices, I dare say, as well as I do," said the receiver of stolen goods.

"Silver, three-and-sixpence an ounce, and gold in the same proportion."

"Nonsense, nonsense," answered Williams. "Solomons always gives four-and-sixpence."

"Impossible!" cried Levi, holding up his hands and eyes.

"But I know it," answered Williams.

"Not now, not now," exclaimed the Jew.

"He might do so six months ago, but times are very bad at present, and no man can do it and gain an honest livelihood. Three-and-nine is the last farthing."

Williams, however, held out for at least four shillings, and gained his point; for the value of the precious metals in England at that period was higher than it had ever been before or since. Mr. Levi, nevertheless, did not give up any one point without fighting a vigorous battle; for, in general, time is of no value to a Jew, and he would have sat up the whole night debating about a sixpence, if he had seen any probability of gaining it. In regard to the gold there was as much discussion as respecting the silver, Mr. Levi declaring that it was an article very difficult to dispose of, though the exact reverse was the matter of fact. He admitted, however, that he had brought crucibles, and fluxes, and scales, and weights with him, so that any wrought vessels that might be presented to him for purchase would be made into what he called soup, or melted, before he left the house, thus losing every mark by which they could be identified. He did not, indeed, tell his companions the fact that his weights were not of the most accurate standard, but he went on so long that Alfred Latimer, having exhausted the punch, got tired and drowsy, and was proposing to retire to bed, when some one knocked at the door, and Mr. Levi, putting by his pocket-book, bade them come in. The figure that appeared was that of the landlord, who closed the door, and, walking slowly up to the table, said, addressing Williams, "I thought it just as well to tell you, Jack, that Harry Soames, the constable from Mallington, has been over here this afternoon, asking a number of questions about you, and whether you had lately been seen in Sturton, and when—it's no harm knowing, you know."

"Oh, no," replied Jack Williams, in a careless tone; "if he asks again, give him my compliments, and tell him I shall be very happy to see him when he calls. Perhaps, I shall call upon him some day."

The landlord laughed with a meaning chuckle, and Alfred Latimer gave an intimation that it was his intention to go to bed.

"Why, I am going to bed, too," said Mr. Galtoun, "for I'm tired; but I'll send the chamber-maid, sir," and he went away.

"We must be off before daylight to-morrow, Mr. Latimer," said Jack Williams, "for it wouldn't do for Soames to find you and I together. I'll wake you in time, however," and so they parted for the night.

CHAPTER LXII.

ALTHOUGH as yet we have left Alfred Latimer behind the rest of the characters of our true history, and, with the exception of the glimpse which we gave of him on the night of Sunday, when he visited for a few minutes his mother's dwelling, have only traced his course up to a late hour on Saturday night or Sunday morning—an omission which we shall speedily proceed to remedy—we must once more change the scene, and inflict a light punishment upon the reader, such as the excellent laws of England often did permit formerly, and sometimes do permit still, to be inflicted upon perfectly innocent people. We mean to say that we will put him for a short time into the black hole. Now, the black hole of the town of —, to which young Blackmore had been very appropriately conveyed, was of a peculiar construction. In former times there had stood in the very centre of the market-place a large triangular pile of old small dilapidated buildings, used chiefly as low shops, some of which were only opened on market days; the remaining portion of these edifices had been occupied as tenements by the poor of the place, and supplied to every crowd collected, upon whatsoever occasion, a numerous accession of dirty ragged urchins, full of fun, mischief, and stentorian lungs. All magistrates, but especially town councillors, have a great and laudable dislike to the poor, and more particularly to poor boys—they hate their rags, they hate their fun, they hate their mischief, as they ought to do—and these buildings were, moreover, an eyesore to some architectural geniuses amongst the civic authorities. The age being an age of improvement, and it being in general admitted that the poor ought to have no houses to live in, the magistrates—they called themselves the town—bought these ancient buildings of their proprietor, gave notice to quit to the tenants, and announced their intention of enlarging and improving the market-place by their demolition. The scheme was carried into effect; but it suggested itself to an architect, who was brother-in-law to the mayor, that the public square would look very bare and shabby without some edifice in the centre, and, as the town was much troubled with birds of a certain feather, it was resolved to build a cage for them. But in pulling down the old houses, a number of cellars had been discovered. Some were filled up before the bright idea of the cage presented itself, but one or two remained, and the architect determined to employ one of these as a black hole, for more refractory prisoners, immediately below the building above. Being a

man of genius, and having a touch of classical knowledge, he designed his cage upon the model of a Temple of Mercury; but whether it was in allusion to the wings of the messenger of the gods, or to the care he was known to take of thieves and pickpockets, the mayor and common council could never discover. This temple was accordingly raised upon a flight of four stone steps, up which the destined inhabitants of the place, who were certainly not tenants at will, usually walked very unwillingly; but just at the portico—for it, too, had a portico—was a small iron-bound door, which led by a narrow staircase some ten feet down into the cellar now denominated the black hole. The name was not ill bestowed for black and dreary, most assuredly, it was. Not that it received no light, for there was a sort of spiracle above which admitted just sufficient to allow the prisoner to grope about, and see something of the misery of the den to which he had been consigned. It gave enough air, too, to allow a man to live with some oppression of chest, but in a very small degree, if at all, mitigated the damp unwholesome stench. It was, in short, a capital place for getting up a typhus fever, and had more than once proved very successful in that respect when the tenant took up his occupancy on a Saturday evening, and remained there till the magistrates met at noon on the Monday. The comforts of the dwelling consisted of a liberal supply of straw, which went on accumulating from week to week as fresh bundles were imported, as much cold water as a captive could make the constable bring him, and a sufficient portion of dry bread to prevent him from starving. The mayor, on one occasion, boasted that a prisoner in the black hole never cost the town more than a twopenny-halfpenny per diem, but that mayor was a great political economist, and some other functionaries did not do so well.

In this black hole, then furnished as we have described, young John Blackmore was safely lodged on the night of Sunday, after having been interrogated by Mr. Quatterly. He very soon found that even his father's cottage, which he had been accustomed to consider the most disagreeable place on earth, might have afforded him a much more agreeable lodging than that which was now provided for him. He would have preferred the water which the constable and his man supplied, an admixture of gin—not being at all aware that the English had happily and appropriately applied to that liquor the Persian name for a bad spirit. The straw also scratched him, and annoyed him, and the odor of the place was anything but pleasant to his olfactory nerves. But all these sensations were as nothing, when compared with those which succeeded, when left alone in the darkness of the night; with nothing to converse with but his own thoughts, which were certainly not the most cheering companions he could have had.

For some time the various noises in the town enlivened him a little. Carts rolled along, with cheerful voices talking; even a carriage was heard whirling through the market-place, and then receding with a slowly-diminishing sound, like the distant roar of thunder, fading away into the rustle of the sea upon a pebbly shore. A party of merry lads sang a gay song, which

he had often sung in other days, and for several minutes their voices were heard echoing through the streets, faint and more faint, like the memories of youth. Then came a pause, broken only by the church clock striking, solemn and high up towards the sky, like the voice of an angel in the air, warning man of the rapid course of mortal time. Then there was a dead silence; but it, too, was at length interrupted by the uproarious merriment of a drunken Saturday night party reeling home to their miserable wives. After that all was still.

The air seemed heavy with thought. It oppressed him, weighed him down. He tried to sleep, but he could not. He fancied that he would be game to the last; he said, "D—n them! they shan't frighten me!" but to whomsoever he meant to apply the pronoun "they," it was not any other individual who frightened him—it was himself. He had not support within, he had nothing to rest upon in his own heart. All that the sad camera-obscura showed him was weakness past, evil committed, vice encouraged, but no good thing. The warnings of his father, an honest, upright, humble man—the lessons of his mother, a pious kind-hearted, though somewhat too good-natured woman—were remembered, it is true, but remembered only as having been despised, neglected, violated. It was all vanity and vexation of spirit. He tossed about upon the straw for some time in terrible mental anguish. He made a struggle for firmness and for fortitude. He wavered, he hesitated; but gradually solitary thought—like time wearing away the masonry of some ill-constructed building—undermined all his powers of resistance, and starting suddenly up, he exclaimed "Hang that I do not tell all. Why the devil should I? I am like a dying dog in the straw, and very likely get myself scragged into the bargain, for a set of fellows who don't care a pin about me? Even Latimer could only afford to give me five shillings for riding over all that way to warn him! I'll take care of myself, or they will bring me in as an accomplice;" and thus saying he found his way up the stairs and knocked loudly at the door, fondly fancying that the constable was there on guard. Nobody answered, however, for Mr. Higginthorp was by that time at least half a mile distant, soundly snoring in his bed, and dreaming of captions, and warrants, and arrests, mingled with a confused crowd of poachers, and lions, and the class which may be called misdeemeanorites. From the inside of the cage no reply was returned but by the hollow voice of emptiness, and young Blackmore knocked again harder than before, saying to himself "The old codger's sound asleep."

He soon became aware, however, that there was nobody there—that he was left totally alone in the midst of the market-place—that if he was ill he might be ill—that if he died he might die, without any one to assist, to support, or to comfort him. He sat down upon the steps, and, leaning his head upon his two hands, had well nigh given way to tears. But who can tell all the horrors of that night as he lay in the desolation of captive wickedness, calculating upon the events of the morrow. Most likely, he thought the constable would not come again till it was time to take him before the

magistrates; and what might not happen in the interim? Others more guilty than himself might be detected, caught, induced to turning king's evidence, and thus cut him off from all the merit of confession. He had been warned by the solicitor that he was casting away his last chance, and now he thought it was done; that very likely the opportunity was lost for ever, and that his own obstinacy had sealed his fate. There was nobody near to hear the confession that he longed to make—the earth was round him like a living grave—the bars, the bolts, the stonework kept him in, and prevented him from executing what fear, if not penitence, prompted; and he felt as we might suppose the spirit of the dead must feel when a life of impenitence is at an end, and the dark irrevocable barrier of the tomb dropped between mortal crime and the backward path of repentance and amendment. Oh, how he writhed under the tortures of his own fancies!—how fear took a thousand shapes to augment his anguish!—how everything horrible within the range of possibility was presented to his imagination, during that long dark sleepless night of silence and solitude! It seemed as if the hours of darkness would never come to an end; and had it not been for the striking of the clock, he would have fancied that day had dawned long before it really appeared, and that there was no means whatsoever for the blessed light to visit his dungeon. Even though he heard the hours strike, impatience got the better of reason, and made him think that it must be day-break a full hour before the sun really rose.

At length a faint gray stream of light began to pour forth the spiracle we have mentioned, and painted a long ellipse upon the floor, or rather upon the pavement of the place. At first it was so dim that he thought his eyes deceived him, but gradually it grew brighter, and then changed from gray, through a sort of dove-colour, to a rosy hue, and he could hear a distant bird singing sweetly. It was certainly day, and the light revived some hope, though faint—faint, indeed, for he was exhausted in mind and body with the terrors he had suffered. All firmness was gone—all thought of resistance was at an end; he was prepared to say anything, to do anything that might deliver him from such horrors as he had endured, and those still more terrible which he anticipated. But the constable did not come, and he listened eagerly for sounds, seated upon the straw, with his hands clasped tight over his knees. At length the noise of a foot-fall caught his ear, heavy and slow. It was that of a townsman passing to his work; and getting as near to the spiracle as he could, the prisoner called to him to tell the constable that somebody wanted to speak with him at the cage. The man heard him not, however, or at least took no notice; he knew nobody was likely to call him, and on he plodded with the same slow heavy step, without the least interruption.

"They can't hear me," said young Blackmore, "I am shut out from every resource. What shall I do? what shall I do!" and he wrung his hands in bitter despair.

Then again he crept up the steps, and stood watching for any opportunity. Seven o'clock

struck—eight o'clock—it was approaching nine, when a brisk active step was heard, and then the rattle of a key, the drawing of a bolt, and the creaking of a door. The step then sounded close at hand, and before the door at the top of the steps could be opened, the unhappy lad knocked hard, exclaiming "Mr. Constable! Mr. Constable, I want to speak to you."

The next moment the door was thrown back, and the gruff voice of Mr. Higginthorp exclaimed, "What the devil are you knocking for! What do you want, you young blackguard!"

"I want to tell all," exclaimed John Blackmore, "I want to ease my mind."

"I've a notion you're a bit too late, my kiddy," answered Mr. Higginthorp, "you should have spoken last night;" and then he added, at a venture, "Ah, people are after them fellows, and, I dare say, have caught them by this time. Some of them will stag, in course, and may, perhaps, be beforehand with you."

"I don't care," cried young Blackmore, "I will tell all, to put myself at rest."

"Stop, stop a bit," cried Mr. Higginthorp, "I masn't hear nothing till I've got sum'un to witness that I warned you properly."

"No, no, let me tell," cried the youth, almost frantically, "I want no warning."

"It won't do, young cove, it won't do," replied the constable, "I knows better. We must have everything in order. I'm not going to be hauled up and rated for pumping a prisoner, not I. There, go down a bit—go down, I say, or I'll pitch you down head foremost. I'll soon call Neddy, and he shall hear what I say. He's only there just in t'other street opposite."

Driven back into his den, the unhappy youth remained waiting at the bottom of the stairs for about five minutes, at the end of which time he was called up again into the cage to the presence of our friend Mr. Higginthorp and his long-necked assistant. The door was shut and locked, and the constable, in the first instance waving his hand to enjoin silence, addressed a sort of prefatory discourse to his companion in the following terms: "You see, Neddy, this here young man, as we nabbed last night, declares his intention of making a full confession. But I wouldn't hear a word, not I—not a single syllabus, till you were present to bear witness that I uses no inducement whatsoever to make him do that same, but that I warns him, on the contrary, that what he says will be taken down, and may be used agin him—not that I say it will, because I thinks—howsomever, that's nothing to nobody what I thinks; and so now, being warned, you may go on, young man, if you likes; and if you doesn't like, why you may let it alone or not as the case may be; but whatever you says, tell nothing but the truth, for you may chance to have to take an oath to it, which would be mighty awkward if it wasn't true—Stop a bit; bring me that stool, Neddy, and hold the ink here that I may dip my pen. Wait a minute, I am not ready yet," and he wrote at the top of the paper in a good clerly hand, using the stool for a table, "The confession of John Blackmore, junior, taken before us, Thomas Higginthorp and Edward Scraggs, constable and sub-constable of the town of —, on this — day of —, in the year of our Lord —"

"Now go on if you likes."

"Well, I declare I have nothing to do with it whatever," said young Blackmore."

"He declares he has nothing to do with it whatsomever," wrote Mr. Higginthorp, reading the words aloud at the same time.

"And I only heard it by accident one day when I was in a public-house with Maltby and Jack Williams."

"He only heard it promiskus when he was in a public with Jack Williams and—what was the other gentleman's christian name?" inquired Mr. Higginthorp.

"William Maltby," replied the youth, and Mr. Higginthorp put it down.

"They were talking at first very low," continued young Blackmore, "and then they talked louder, and I soon made out that Mr. Williams intended to break in this vory night, into Maltby Hall, and take away all the plate and stuff they could find."

"Was that this ere night as is passed, or that ere night as is coming?" asked Mr. Higginthorp.

"That that's passed," answered the lad; and Mr. Higginthorp proceeded to write down, reading aloud at the same time—"Jack Williams and William Maltby intended to break in—"

"No, no," cried young Blackmore, eagerly, "I did not say Bill intended to break in; for Williams said he wouldn't have him; that he was not up to the mark for such a job. That was what made them speak so loud, for they had well nigh had a bit of a row about it. But Williams said he would give him a couple of hundred for his share, and he'd have no risk; and that he'd get Mr. Latimer to help, who was up to anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter."

"Manslaughter!" said Mr. Higginthorp, writing.

"Then, here, on Saturday night," continued Mr. Blackmore, junior, "I was sent over as fast as I could gallop with a note to Mr. Latimer, from John Williams himself."

"What did you gallop upon?" demanded the constable in a sudden tone.

"Upon a horse, to be sure," replied the youth, peevishly, beginning to fancy that Mr. Higginthorp was making a jest of him, and feeling his situation no joke.

"It might have been an ass," said the constable gravely. "However we'll impound the horse. Go on."

"Why, then I found Mr. Latimer and Captain Tankerville together; but the captain soon cut his stick, and not long after Jack Williams himself came over with a horse and gig, and Mr. Latimer went away with him, for I watched. What they've done I don't know; but what they went to do I can very well guess."

"We must have no guess work," said Mr. Higginthorp. "Facts—facts is what we wants; so if you've got any more on 'em you may bring 'em out. That's to say if you likes. I holds out no inducements—not I. It must be a voluntary confession to be of any good to you, or me either."

The unfortunate lad added a few more particulars of no great importance, and then, looking up piteously in the constable's face, he inquired, "Now I've told the whole truth exactly as it is. Do you think there is any chance for me?"

"Why, I can't exactly say," answered Mr. Higginthorp, scratching his head: "howsoever, you see, young man, you are but a cessary before the fact, and not arter, which is something in your favor. Then you made full confession before examination—that's summat more. No, I don't think they will deal hard with you. Perhaps they may take you as king's evidence, and then you've a chance of promotion to be a general informer in course of time. However, I says nothing about that—I promises no man nothing; but I think, now you've cleared your stomach, we may leave you in this here cage, where you'll be safe enough—you can't get out. But I must run away now and tell the magistrate—here, read that over, Neddy, and put your sig, then I'll do the same and be off. When I'm gone you can get him a basin of cocoa and a roll, to keep his spirits up. One should always fatten informers, as one does hens to make them lay the better;" and with this sage axiom, Mr. Higginthorp took his departure, having first seen his assistant read the paper over after a fashion and put his signature, which looked more like the print of a bird's claw that had hopped into an inkstand than the handwriting of a human being.

When he and his companion were gone, and young Blackmore had partaken of his cocoa and his roll, the youth began to suspect, from various signs and symptoms which had betrayed themselves in the worthy constable, that previous to the confession just made, neither Mr. Higginthorp nor the magistrates had known anything of the proposed robbery at Mallington Hall, and that consequently he himself had very probably put his friend's neck in a halter for which he was not a little sorry. It was too late now, however, to amend his error, and consequently he determined to carry the matter through with a bold front.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE housekeeper's room at Mallington Hall was one of those small, lofty chambers which our ancestors of the reign of George I. and George II. occasionally stuck into any spare corner, with which they had nothing else to do. It had certainly not been intended originally for the purposes to which it was now applied, for it was elegant in its decorations, and in the better and newer part of the house. The punching, to which in the other rooms the wider extent of the walls gave symmetry and due proportion, here ran up tall and slender, each long parallelogram surrounded by its wreath of carved flowers, looking like a tall old maid at a ball—prim, stiff, and rigid, notwithstanding all the gay ornaments of lighter and more graceful things with which they were decked. It was a very comfortable room, however, having but two windows and one door—a great advantage in these northern climes, where we have wind enough and cold enough, without making more apertures than necessary to let them in. It was well carpeted, too, and the huge fireplace, with its massive mantel-piece, well supplied with logs, was blazing brightly, and crackling cheerfully; but yet, on the night of the Sunday which we have been lately speaking

of, good old Mrs. Chalke, the housekeeper, as she sat before the fire, was in anything but a merry or even a tranquil mood. There was some wind stirring, and occasionally the panelling cracked or the tall window rattled, and whenever such was the case the good old lady started and looked round, expecting to see neither ghost nor hobgoblin, but some more terrible apparition still, of flesh and blood, armed with cold steel and leaden bullets against the scanty remains of life which yet wore hers. Once when the gust was more vehement than ordinary, and, like an importunate beggar, clamored loudly for admittance, she suddenly stretched out her hand, and seized the bell, forgetting that the girl, who was her only companion in the house, could render her but little effectual assistance, or perhaps thinking that if she was to be murdered, she had better be so in the presence of respectable witnesses.

Though the gust died away, good Mrs. Chalke still held the bell-rope in her hand, as if to be prepared against the worst; and, at length, after some consideration, she gave it a gentle pull. In a minute or two after, a quick pair of feet were heard coming along the passage, and the housemaid appeared, with a few of agitation and alarm, as if she expected to behold some horrible spectacle. In fact, the nerves of both the poor women had been so sadly shattered by the late attempt upon the house that they felt themselves, like the diminished garrison of a besieged city, in a constant state of apprehension, lest some undefended point of the works should be forced by the enemy without their knowing it.

"What o'clock is it, Sally?" asked Mrs. Chalke, turning to the housemaid.

"Lord ha' mercy, ma'am!" exclaimed the latter; "I thought something was the matter; and though I must be about the place, I feel quite in a twitter as soon as ever I am left alone. Then those long passages frighten me out of my life every time I go through them."

Sally had not answered the housekeeper's inquiry, however, and Mrs. Chalke repented it, obtaining for a reply the information that it was a quarter past ten by the clock in the kitchen.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the housekeeper, "what can make Mr. Edmonds so late! I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Oh, I dare say not, ma'am," rejoined Sally. "You know he's always out long on Sunday nights, looking after the game; for he says that bad characters are always more about then than on any other day."

"That's what I'm afraid of," replied Mrs. Chalke; "and while he's looking after the game we might all have our throats cut."

"Dear me, ma'am! don't talk so," said Sally; "I declare you make my blood quite cruddle. I haven't slept a wink one blessed night since those fellows tried to break in; and I dare say they would murder me first, all along of my having been the one to ring the alarm-bell, which spoiled their sport."

"No, they would murder me first," said Mrs. Chalke, jealous of the dignity of her office. "They would murder me first for the keys; and, besides, I dare say they know nothing

about who rang the bell. It must be a terrible thing to have one's throat cut. I've had no stomach for mutton ever since."

Sally, who did not see the connection between mutton and housebreakers, gazed in Mrs. Chalke's face with a lack-lustre look, partly of stupidity and partly of horror, thinking that the worthy housekeeper was becoming slightly deranged, and repeating the word "mutton!" in a tone of doubt and inquiry, till Mrs. Chalke replied, "Yes, mutton to be sure. Don't butchers cut sheep's throats as housebreakers cut ours."

"Dear heart!" replied Sally, "so they do," and she put her hand under her chin as if to ascertain whether the operation had been actually performed upon her.

Just at that moment, however, the bell rang sharply and suddenly, and both the good women started and both screamed; after which it suddenly struck Sally that it must be Edmonds himself, who had slept at the house constantly since the night of the attack. Communicating his supposition to Mrs. Chalke, she hurried to the door, while the housekeeper followed, with a flat candlestick in her hand, laying strong imprecations on her fair companion not to turn key or draw bolt till they had ascertained who was the visitor.

"Who's there?" exclaimed Sally, putting her mouth down to the lock.

"Who's there?" cried Mrs. Chalke, adding as a caution to the maid, "Don't put your head here, girl. He might shoot you through the doorway."

Almost at the same moment, however, the well-known voice of Edmonds answered, "It's I, Sally—let us in," and joyfully the door was opened, and poor Edmonds, with a face haggard and worn, both with bitter care and fatigue, entered the hall.

"Dear me, Mr. Edmonds," said Mrs. Chalke, "I'm so glad to see you. I began to think you wouldn't come to-night, and we were in such a repitiation."

"Oh, you need not have been afraid," replied the park-keeper, "you might be sure I would come, Mrs. Chalke. It's a duty to my employer, and I won't fail in my duty, whoever does. But thought it best to take a longer round to night with my men than usual, for I heard about six o'clock from Blackmore, the gardener, that he had seen some fellows of whom I have strong suspicions, driving this way from Sturton this morning. I could find nobody, however, and I saw all their lairs, so they couldn't well cheat me if they were in the park or any where near it."

"I am very tired, however, for I've gone good twelve miles besides my walk in the morning. wonder what tires me so soon. I am not the man I was, or three times as much wouldn't tire me; but one breaks down like an old tree. First goes one branch and then another, and each leaves a gap where the weather pours in and rots the whole core."

While he thus spoke, he paused in the hall, addressing the beginning of his speech to the housekeeper, and ending it apparently to himself—with his eyes fixed upon the stone pavement, and his head bent forward in an attitude of melancholy thought. He looked sad and somewhat wild, and Mrs. Chalke, remarking the expression of his countenance, and thinking

that the weight of his sorrows must have been greatly aggravated by corporeal fatigue, begged him to come into her sitting-room and take a glass of ale and something to eat.

"Thank you, ma'am, thank you," said Edmonds, "I will come and sit down a bit, and perhaps take a jug of beer, for I am weary and thirsty; but I can't eat anything, for I have no stomach now. I shall go to bed soon, for I hope to sleep to-night. It's a long time since I slept."

The good lady, however, when once he was seated by her fire, and the jug of strong ale, with which she intended to strengthen both the inner and the outer man, placed beside him at the table, attempted to while away the time by asking questions, although, to say sooth, Edmonds was very little inclined for conversation. It is a mistake, however, that many people make, who think that they can wean us from our sorrows by calling our mere words to indifferent topics. As well might they think to relieve a mother's mind by taking her on some trifling errand from the cradle of her sick babe. The heart and the thoughts are still with our sorrows, whatever subject may employ our words.

"You were talking about your employer, Mr. Edmonds," she said, "he seems a very nice sort of gentleman, but I should like to know who he is."

"He is a very kind, good-hearted man," answered the park-keeper, gazing thoughtfully into the fire. "As to who he is, that's no business of ours, at least at present. We shall have all in plenty of time, I dare say," and he put the jug to his lips and drank a deep draught of beer.

"Ay, now, Mr. Edmonds, you are very cunning," said the old lady, with a laugh. "You would fain persuade me that you know no more than I do; but I'm quite sure that you know all about it."

Edmonds assured her that she was mistaken, but the old lady laughed again, and shook her head, saying "I know, I know," and as Edmonds made no reply, but thought it not worth his while to undeceive her, she was going on in the same strain, when suddenly, with a great start, she exclaimed "Goodness gracious! what's that! Didn't you hear a step!"

The next instant the cause of the phenomenon she had remarked because evident by Sally, putting in her head and inquiring "Wouldn't you like a toast with your beer, sir?"

"How can you frighten one so, girl!" cried Mrs. Chalke, in a petulant tone; "I declare I thought it was the robbers broke in."

"No, I thank you, Sally," replied Edmonds; "but haven't you any common beer. This ale is too strong."

"There is not a drop in the house, sir," replied the housemaid; "but as to its being too strong, it will do you no harm. It's every drop of it pure malt and hops. Home made, I can assure you, just before my lord died."

These last words threw Edmonds into a new fit of meditation. "Ay," he said thoughtfully, "it was a bad day for Mellington Hall when he died, though he used to take no notice of the place, and shut himself up with his books and papers, just as if the park had been a desert."

But things have gone wrong ever since, and we never know, you see. Mrs. Chalke, what it is to have a good thing till we lose it. A good master is a good thing, and he was a good master, for he was always very reasonable and inclined to do what was right and proper, when people told him how."

"Well, I hope this young gentleman will be as good as he," said Mrs. Chalke. "When do you think he'll take possession, Mr. Edmonds?"

"I don't know, I don't know," answered Edmonds; "I tell you, my good dame, you are mistaken. I am just as ignorant about all these things as you are;" and Mrs. Chalke, finding that she could make nothing of him, rose, saying, "Well, now you are come I shall go to bed and sleep in peace. I shouldn't have winked an eye all night if you hadn't been here. You had better have your gun with you in your room—there it stands in the corner. Don't forget it, there's a good man, for if they were to get hold of it they might blow all our brains out."

"No fear, no fear," answered Edmonds, turning his back to the fire, "I will warrant it. There is nobody to be afraid of within five miles of the house, unless they be in Mallington, and there are sharp eyes looking out for them there, too. You may rest quietly enough—nobody will disturb your sleep."

"She has no daughter?" continued the poor park-keeper, murmuring to himself, as soon as Mrs. Chalke was gone. "I wish I were dead, though it is a sin to say so, with all the blessings that God has still given me. I wish I could think of other things;" and after pressing his hand upon his brow for a moment, he took up the jug of beer again and emptied it at a draught. The quantity it had contained was not sufficient to have any effect upon his intellect; but still the beer was very strong, and he himself weary and exhausted. It seemed to soothe him—to render him, perhaps, a little more drowsy than before, and after standing before the table a minute or two, he took up the candle which Mrs. Chalke had left, and walked slowly away towards the chamber which he had lately tenanted on the ground-floor, leaving his gun behind him.

CHAPTER LXIV.

We must now treat of a very uninteresting person and his uninteresting history; but as there are other things necessary to the constitution of a wholesome plum-pudding besides plums, so there are other than interesting people necessary to the construction of a tale like this. On the Saturday, an hour after noon, Harry Soames, the constable of Mallington, received a summons to the house of Mr. Middleton, the magistrate, which, as the reader knows, is situate at the distance of about a mile and a half from the village. As he had a liking for the active exercise of his profession, and doubted not that some pleasant opportunity of performing his functions was about to be afforded him, Mr. Soames trudged over willingly enough, and on presenting himself was kept for about a quarter of an hour in the hall, while voices

were heard talking in a little room at the side, which Soames knew to be Mr. Middleton's own especial den, whence issued many of those brilliant decrees with which the justices of peace in those days used to astonish the weak minds of persons learned in the law. At the end of that period the door of that room opened, and Miss Mathilda Martin issued forth, while the voice of Mr. Middleton was heard to say, "Thank you, Miss Martin, thank you; I always was sure he was an impostor. I will look to it, I will look to it."

Miss Martin passed Mr. Soames without deigning to speak to him; but she bowed her lofty head, with an air of conscious deserving, and immediately after the constable was called to the presence of the magistrate, who as he entered inquired of the servant who ushered the man in whether Sir Simon Upplestone had arrived.

The servant answered in the negative, and Mr. Middleton, seating himself again with an important air, remarked, "I fear, Soames, we may be accused of neglect of our duty in suffering this young man to remain so long in Mallington under such suspicious circumstances."

"Is it Mr. Morton your worship was talking of?" asked Soames, though he very well knew that such was the case.

"To be sure, to be sure," answered Mr. Middleton; "he is the only person to whom the terms I have used could apply. From all the circumstances I have heard, and, indeed, I may say, from what I have seen, I have not the slightest doubt that he is neither more nor less than a swindler, and will ultimately be identified with the clerk who has absconded from London, and for whose apprehension a reward has been offered."

Harry Soames scratched his head, and as Mr. Middleton was well aware that he was not a man dull of comprehension, while he himself was perfectly convinced that his own statements were the most pellucid that judicial perspicuity ever put forth, he could not conceive what made the constable hesitate in this unwonted manner. He accordingly asked, "What is the matter, Soames?"

"Why, I was thinking, your worship," said the constable, "that Gibbs could tell us more of the matter, if he liked."

"And who the devil is Gibbs?" asked Mr. Middleton, solemnly.

"Why, the traveling perfumer man, your worship," answered the constable. "He who has been down here so long hanging about with his fragrant Balm of Trinidad. He has let out to me more than once that he knows summat of Mr. Morton, and t'other day he shook his head, and looked wonderful knowing. But the difficulty will be to make him speak."

"We'll grant a warrant against him," said Mr. Middleton. "He may be art and part in the offence, for what we know."

"Better summons him as a witness, your honor," said Soames. "A warrant would be a stopper, I should think."

"Perhaps it might—perhaps it might," replied the magistrate, sagaciously. "We will summons him as a witness. Get me down 'Burn's Justice,' Soames. There it stands, on the shelf behind you. I expect Sir Simon Upplestone

every moment," he continued, after having looked into the magistrate's text-book for some minutes. "He's a poor foolish fellow, it is true; but he will serve to countenance what one does! In the mean time, you go down, and bring up this man, Gibbs. Tell Skinner to send up some one to act as our clerk; and take measures to prevent this young vagabond from making his escape."

"Lord bless your worship!" replied Mr. Soames, "he has been off from Mallington House, ever since early this morning."

Mr. Middleton looked aghast; but Soames consoled him the moment after by informing him that he had good reason to believe Mr. Morton was only over at Sturton, and then proceeded to execute his mission, which occupied rather more than an hour.

He returned with Mr. Gibbs, who, to do him justice, came very unwillingly, trying hard by the way to gather from the constable what the magistrates wanted. But Mr. Soames was as prudent and rentent as a prime minister. He would not say a word, either of small or great importance, and Mr. Gibbs was ushered into the presence of the two magistrates, perfectly ignorant of their object in sending for him.

"Now, Mr. Gibbs," said Sir Simon Upplestone, "tell us what you know of this matter?"

"I don't know what the matter is, sir," answered Mr. Gibbs. "I only know that the fragrant Balm of Trinidad is incomparable in its qualities, nourishing and strengthening the hair, encouraging the growth of eye-brows and whiskers, restoring the supreme ornament of the human person to a glossy black or brown hue, when it has become grey with time or care, and invigorating and restoring the graceful natural curl, when, either by the effects of tropical climates, or"—

"Pooh, pooh!" said Mr. Middleton, "that's not what we are talking about. Sir Simon, we must put the question in another form, and carry on the examination regularly. Now answer, Mr. Gibbs—you know a person who calls himself Morton?"

"I have that honor, sir," replied Mr. Gibbs.

"Not a great one, I fancy," rejoined the magistrate, who piqued himself upon saying smart things. "Now, answer me truly, for we shall swear you to your deposition. Have you any reason for believing that this Mr. Morton, as he calls himself, is ever known by any other name?"

Mr. Gibbs was confounded, and knew not what to answer. He would have fain plunged into the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, which, in difficult circumstances, and when he had nothing else to say, had often proved to him an invaluable resource. But in the present instance he did not know how to bring it in, and in the confusion of the moment, replied, "Perhaps I have."

"Take that down," said Mr. Middleton, addressing one of Mr. Skinner's young men, who had come up to act as clerk. "He has reason to know that he occasionally goes by another name."

"Now, Mr. Gibbs, what is the other name he goes by," demanded Sir Simon Upplestone bluntly.

"That I can't exactly say," replied Mr. Gibbs.

"'Tis quite sufficient, Sir Simon, 'tis quite sufficient," said Mr. Middleton. "He may have half a dozen other *aliases*. His going by another name is a proof that he's a swindler. He may call himself colonel this, or lord that, or captain the other, but what is that to us? Now, Mr. Gibbs, I say again, answer truly. Did you ever see this young man in any peculiar situation which would induce you to doubt his respectability, or know of his frequenting bad characters, or—anything of the kind? Remember, we have good information, Mr. Gibbs."

With the question thus put Mr. Gibbs did not know well how to deal. He had doubts, it is true, in regard to Mr. Morton, but, at the same time, all that he had seen of that gentleman's demeanor had so thoroughly impressed him with the notion that he was what he seemed, that he neither liked to explain those doubts or their causes unless under compulsion. After some hesitation, then, he replied, "Why, you see, sir, I came down here to sell, either by wholesale or retail, the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, which, if you will allow me to say, is one of the most sovereign"—

"Pooh! no more of such nonsense," cried Sir Simon Upplestone. "The question is very plain, Mr. Gibbs. Will you answer it, or will you not? There is such a thing as contempt of court, sir, and compounding of felony, and misprision of treason," &c.

"In one word, Mr. Gibbs," added the other magistrate, "if you do not deal candidly with us, we may beg you to take another position, and, instead of allowing you to be a witness, may treat you as an accessory."

All Mr. Gibbs's firmness melted away at the threat, and, finding that the fragrant Balm of Trinidad had failed him, he replied in a humble tone, "why, gentlemen, I was only going to tell you how all the matter began; but if you want to hear the beginning, I can only say that when first I came down here, I was knocked down and robbed, and I am quite sure that I know the man who did it—a fellow well known in these parts, called Jack Williams."

"The greatest rascal and poacher that ever lived," cried Sir Simon. "Why, he killed me thirty pheasants in one night six or seven years ago. Go on, Mr. Gibbs."

"Well, gentlemen, I have watched him ever since as close as one man can watch another, being quite certain I should catch him out at last. I heard a great deal of his hanging about Mallington Park, and so I used to go there of a night to see what he was about. I always took a brace of bosom friends with me, but still I thought it best to keep out of his way, and so I used now and then to get up into a tree. Well, one night, when I was in a beech, with low branches, that I could climb easily, I saw him meet another man there, and have a long conference with him, though I could not hear what it was about; but I saw that they often looked towards the place where I was, and I began to be in a little bit of a fright. At length they parted, and when Williams took round to the other side of the wood, as if to cut me off that way, the other came straight up towards the tree where I had perched myself; thinking

that I should fare ill between both, I determined to give them leg bail, and, dropping down at once, I took to my heels across the park, only having just time to see that the one who was coming up was Mr. Morton.

"Ho, ho!" cried Sir Simon Upplestone.

"Ah, ha!" cried Mr. Middleton; "and pray what night was that, Mr. Gibbs?"

"'Twas about a week ago," answered Mr. Gibbs; "but I've got the date down at home."

"Wasn't that the night that they tried to break into Mallington Hall?" demanded Harry Soames, who had remained in the room.

"Precisely," answered Mr. Gibbs; and this reply elicited two new notes of admiration from the mouth of each of the magistrates.

"Well, I think, Sir Simon, that we have perfectly enough information, with that which I communicated to you before, to justify us in issuing a warrant, and having this young man apprehended. Fill up a warrant, Mr. Masters," he continued, turning to the clerk; and then, addressing Soames, he proceeded as follows:—

"You will get a horse at the Bagpipes, Soames, and ride over immediately to Sturton, where you will endeavor to find out this Mr. Morton, who, you think, is there. You can make inquiries after Jack Williams, too; but that is a matter for after consideration. I suppose there is no chance of this Morton coming back to Mallington."

"Why these fellows have sometimes the impudence of the devil," answered Mr. Soames; "and I should think he had got hold of too good a thing there to let go easily, unless some one bites his tail."

This delicate allusion to an operation sometimes performed to bull terriers when they have got each other by the throat pleased mightily the two magistrates, who were both of them practically acquainted with country sports, and who neither of them had been at all pleased with the footing on which Mr. Morton had been received by Mrs. Charlton.

"We'll bite his tail, and make him let go his hold, I'll warrant you," replied Sir Simon Upplestone, laughing. "You only find out where he is, that's all."

"We must think of some means of catching him, if he does come," said Mr. Middleton; "but leave that to us, Soames, and be off to Sturton as fast as possible. You, Mr. Gibbs, hold yourself in readiness to attend and give evidence, whenever you may be called upon;" and the clerk having made the traveler sign his deposition, the whole party broke up.

The two magistrates retired to the drawing-room to converse with the ladies, filled with importance by the transaction in which they had just been engaged.

It is a grand and extraordinary event in the lives of country magistrates to have to hunt down a swindler, or a thief, or a highwayman. Something that crams them full of business, excitement, and conceit at the time, and is often dwelt upon afterwards as amongst the most remarkable of their recorded deeds at petty or quarter sessions. To Mr. Middleton and Sir Simon Upplestone it was almost as good as a fox-hunt; and wonderful was it how their hearts expanded with the most benevolent feelings to all immediately around them, in conse-

quence of the business they had just been transacting. The thought of catching, imprisoning, and sending for trial such a person as Mr. Morton, made them more courteous and polite than they had ever been known before; and Mr. Middleton insisted upon Sir Simon's staying to dinner, after which, and a due imbibation of very excellent old port, they parted, Mr. Middleton declaring that he must write a note to Mrs. Charlton, warning her of the character of her late guest, and requiring her to detain him if he should present himself at Mallington House.

To tell the truth, the worthy magistrate was not quite in the proper state by this time to write a letter, either of civility or business; for the lights began to multiply themselves in his eyes, and his tongue was not very glib at its office. Nevertheless, the note was written, and given to a servant, with orders to take it to Mallington House early the next morning. The effect that it produced will be shown hereafter.

CHAPTER LXV.

TOWARDS six o'clock on Sunday morning, a gig, containing two individuals, rolled out of the yard at the Bell Inn, at Sturton, and took the way towards Mallington. It was still dark, for though a light line of gray was to be seen in the sky, the sun had not risen high enough to give much light to the world, and the streets of the town, though it was generally a gay-looking, bustling place, looked dreary and deserted in the misty dawn. The horse which dragged the vehicle, though at so early an hour, looked anything but fresh and ready for his work, and his pace, especially at first, was slow and tedious. At about a mile, or a mile and a half from the town, however, when he had become warm, he stepped out at a better pace, and went on so rapidly that of all the many in carts and cars which were met by the two contained within the gig, Jack Williams fancied none would recognize him, wrapped up as he was in great coats and handkerchiefs, for he would not believe that there were any whose memory was sufficiently powerful to recall a face or figure which they had not seen for six or seven years, and it so happened that they passed no one with whom he had renewed his previous acquaintance. But men almost always miscalculate in counting upon such things, and worthy Mr. Williams did so in the present instance, for not only was there one, but, on the contrary, several, who not only remembered him instantly, but knew his whole fate and character, and could tell a number of deeds that he had done in the wild and reckless season of youth.

He would rather, certainly, have had the road to himself, but yet he did not believe that any of those who were going to the early morning service at Sturton would think it worth their while to talk of himself and his companion. He did not much care, indeed, what they said of himself, for he counted upon his own boldness, decision, and skill so to conceal his movements, after his arrival at the scene of his projected enterprise, as to throw out suspicion, at least till he was clear of the country; but the fact of Mr. Latimer being with him puzzled him a little, and he more than once asked his com-

passion, as they passed by cart or gig, whether he knew the people in it. Alfred Latimer still answered "No;" but, nevertheless, Williams selected the roads which ran nearest to Wenlock Wood, and when he came to a turning leading direct from Sturton to the wild heath at the back of Mallington Park, he drew in the rein, saying, "I think you had better get out here, Mr. Latimer, and while I go on and put up the gig, make the best of your way to the cave. I'll just see how the land lies, and what is going on at Mallington, and then come back and join you there—you can find it, I dare say."

"Upon my life, I don't know," replied Alfred Latimer. "I never was there but once, you know, and it's not easy to find."

"That's the good of it," answered Jack Williams, with a smile which he intended to be encouraging; "but if you wait somewhere thereabouts I won't be long. You can keep amongst the bushes till you see me, if you don't find the cave."

"Bring something to eat and drink with you," said Alfred Latimer. "Such work doesn't do for an empty stomach—a bottle of wine would not be amiss."

"A bottle of brandy is better," rejoined Williams; "it goes further, and carries more spirit with it."

"I shan't need that," answered Alfred Latimer, nodding his head significantly; and, well satisfied with the dogged determination that he saw, Williams drove away.

When he was gone the unfortunate young man—for well may those be called unfortunate who are led on by Satan and their own bad passions from one crime to another—took his way up the road into the heart of the wood. By this time day had risen high, the chilly mist of the morning had passed away, the sky was clear and bright above head, and the air fresh and invigorating. At any other time, or with any other thoughts within his bosom, Alfred Latimer might have found the morning wood walk exhilarating and full of joy. But there is something in the breast of crime discordant with the beauties of nature—it has no part in the harmony of God's creation; and perhaps the freshness of the dawn itself, the innocence, it may be called, of infant day is that which jars most harshly with it. Alfred Latimer took no pleasure in the scene. The varying tints afforded by the lesser shrubs by his side, and the older boughs above, had nothing beautiful to his eye. The glimpses of the sky, the occasional catch of the distant landscape, where, for a moment, the trees broke away, gave him no delight; the rocky banks with their rugged faces, now imitating the human countenance, now taking some grotesque form of rough-hewn chair or table, or canopy, called up no imaginations in his mind. Even the sports and habits of youth were forgotten. A hare started suddenly away from his path, and ran on before till it found its accustomed track into the wood—a large pheasant flew whirling up through the thin branches of a withered larch, and skimmed over the tops of the trees—a squirrel darted across the road, and, with dropping tail and extended arms, swarmed up the trunk of a tall fir—but he saw them not, or heeded not if he saw, and with eyes cast down, and arms folded on his

chest, he walked on, musing of what was to come.

It was not that he hesitated—it was not that even then he would have gone back if he could—it was not that he gave way to fear or to remorse. The time was not yet come for that; such feelings might have agitated him in the night, and did so, indeed, as he drove with Williams to Sturton the evening before. But now, in the calm air and the bright light, he walked on, nerving his heart and preparing himself for a deed more dangerous, though, perhaps, less wicked than those he had performed before. He thought it all over: how it was to be done—at what hour it was to take place—when they were to enter the park—where the house. He wondered whether they should get as much as Williams had calculated upon; he even felt a certain grudging at the thought of giving any part of it to one who did not share in the enterprise. In short, he brooded over the meditated crime, and though it cannot be said he longed for the moment for accomplishing it, yet he wished the day were done, for he disliked the tediousness of thoughtful expectation less than the risk and excitement of execution.

At length he came to the spot near which he knew the cave must be, and, remembering the locality pretty well, easily found his way to it. It seemed as if no step had passed its entrance since he was last there. There was the blackened place where the fire had been, the broken bottles, the well-polished bones. Nothing had been touched, and a rabbit running out and making its way to its sandy burrow opposite, at the sound of his footstep, showed him, that at the present moment, at least, the cave was tenanted.

Sitting down near the entrance, for some time his mind followed the course it had been previously pursuing; but, as if weary of such a subject, it would not rest long upon it. He did not wish it to stray thence, however, and he pictured to himself the inside of Mallington Hall, and laid out the scheme of their night's proceedings. He had often rambled over it in other years, when the old lord was away, and knew every room, and passage, and hall; he could have trudged blindfold; but then his thoughts rested at the vestibule, near the great doors, and he remembered that it was there he had first seen Lucy Edmonds, when she came up one day with some message from her father to the old housekeeper, and how he had walked home with her and talked of a thousand things; and some of the purest feelings he had ever felt—some of the sweetest, revived for an instant. He fancied still, as he had fancied then, that he might have been very happy with Lucy for his wife in some flower-covered cottage, and a middle station. He paused upon the image longer than he wished to do, but there was a fascination in it which he could not resist. Its very contrast with his situation, thoughts, and purposes, at the moment, had something that fixed his spirit upon it. It was like the memory of a well in the desert, and even while he was thus thinking, the voices of some merry children passing on their way from the common towards Mallington caught his ear, and gave more reality to the dream of early days.

Starting up, he walked farther back into the cave, almost fancying that they could see him,

and he felt that there was a dark barrier between him and them, which would make it painful for him that the eyes of innocence should rest upon him. Then he plunged into a wide abyss of wild and troublous thoughts. We will not attempt to trace them, for it was a labyrinth without a clue, one branching into another, as if interminably; but their nature, and that to which they tended, may be judged by the words with which they closed, and which they actually uttered in a murmur. "It's no use," he said, "it's no use, I'm too far in now to go back, so why should I think of it?" and once more approaching the mouth of the cave, he looked out and listened. "Williams can't be long!" he thought, for his own reflections had been wearisome to him, and it seemed as if his companion had been gone for more than an hour, ere, in reality, he had been in the cave one half of that time.

At length a step sounded upon the path, and he drew back, for he felt sure that it was not that of Williams. It was lighter, quicker, more youthful; but the instant after, as he stood in the shadow, and looked out upon the trees, which concealed the entrance from the neighboring path, he saw Maltby come round and approach his retreat. Not knowing how far Williams had confided in him, he retired quite to the back of the hollow; but when the man came near the mouth, it soon became apparent to Alfred Latimer that the other was seeking him, for he set down a basket with which he was burdened, and looked in, saying, "D—n it! he is not here. Williams said he must be here long ago."

"Ah, Maltby, is that you!" said the young man, coming forward. "Is Williams coming?" "Presently," replied Maltby. "He's gone to see Tom Brown, and he'll come as soon as he's arranged things with him; but he sent me up with this basket for you, as he thought you might want your breakfast, having had none when you left Sturton."

"I could have waited," replied Alfred Latimer, making his way into the basket, "but I'm devilish hungry, it is true."

"Take care, take care," cried Maltby; "there's a powder flask underneath; for he says that you did not bring any with your pistols."

"They are loaded," answered Alfred Latimer, with a nod of the head, "and I don't think any man who stands two shots from them, will ever have to stand another."

"Ay, but it's always as well to be ready and prepared," answered Maltby. "A man's hand shakes sometimes, you know."

"I don't think mine will," answered Alfred Latimer; "but what the mischief is this?"

"Some black crape for your faces, that's all," replied the other, "in case you should be seen."

"Ay, upon my soul, that's well thought of," said the young gentleman. "Under this they won't easily know one; and those two old women are too well acquainted with my face. Oh, here's the brandy! Bill, will you take a glass?"

"No, I thank you," answered Maltby. "I'll be off to Mallington again. I've got the horse and gig to see after, and I'm to bring them up to the back of the wood at eleven. Good day, Mr. Latimer;" and he turned back through the

wood, leaving the young gentleman once more alone.

There had been something dry and bitter in his manner, which Alfred Latimer did not altogether like; but for about a quarter of an hour he occupied himself with the ample provision of food which the basket contained, and then examined the rest of its contents, which consisted of the powder flask already mentioned, a bundle of picklocks and skeleton keys, and a short bar of steel. When all this was over, however, his thoughts turned again to Bill Maltby's demeanor, and vague apprehensions began to take possession of him. "Williams has trusted him too far," he thought. "I should not wonder if he were to peach, and get us all into a trap. He was always a pitiful scamp, though a devilish good boxer. At all events, I'm sure, if he were hard up he would turn king's evidence, and hang us all."

In these pleasant reveries he passed another hour, till at length Williams himself appeared, and Alfred Latimer at once communicated to him the suspicions which Maltby's manner had inspired. His companion, however, easily quieted him on that score, saying that the youth was a little sulky on account of the quarrel they had had some days before; but that he would not peach for his own sake, as then he would lose all the money he was to have; and as to his turning king's evidence, he might do what he liked, for they would be out of the country before that could do them any harm. "It is only the fools who stay on in England," he continued, "who are nabbed. If a man takes all his measures beforehand, and bolts at once, he is quite secure."

These assurances quieted Alfred Latimer; but, nevertheless, the passing of that day was long and tedious. They sometimes talked, but more frequently remained plunged into deep fits of silence, and meditating the coming hour; but Williams was well pleased to see that, though his young companion had become unnaturally grave and stern, there was no sign of wavering, no apparent hesitation; not even a thought of shrinking from the enterprise before them. When he spoke it was almost always of what they were to do—how they were to act; and if he varied the topic, it was but to notice some passing sound; such as the bell of the distant village church, as it rang to summon the people to prayer and instruction.

Thus they saw noon and evening pass, and gradually the sun went down, leaving the sky all red and glowing for full half an hour after he had sunk from the sight. All then became darkness; the stars, indeed, appearing, first faint and then brighter, but the air below in the valley by the river becoming somewhat dull and misty as the sun went down.

"Tom Brown can't be long now," said Williams at length. "I'll go out and see if he be coming," and accordingly he walked away into the wood, while Latimer remained with his head resting on his hand, and his eyes half closed. It would have been a sad dark spectacle, if one could have looked into his bosom at that moment. At length he rose suddenly, went up to the basket, and drawing forth the bottle of brandy set it to his lips. He took a long draught, and had scarcely done, when Williams

and the ruffian from the common came into the cave.

"We must wait an hour or two yet," said the former. "Tom here tells me, sir, that there are a number of the good folks about, and that Edmonds is out with his men, securing all the place round; so we must be still." When does the moon rise, Tom?"

"She's up now, only you can't see her for the hill," replied the ruffian.

"Ay, but at what hour does she come up?" asked Williams. "I see she's risen plain enough, by the light, but I want to know what o'clock it is?"

"Oh! about ten," answered Alfred Latimer; "but if you wait a little you'll hear Mallington clock strike. I heard it a little while ago, but did not count. It must have been nine, however."

A few minutes after the clock was heard to strike ten, and it was then agreed to wait another hour, in order that all might be still, and the sober folks of the neighborhood retired to rest.

Eleven struck, and then, taking the keys, the powder-flask, and the bar out of the basket, with hardly a word spoken, they issued out into the wood, threaded the narrow paths, approached the scene of their destined crime from the side of Wenlock Common, and paused for an instant close to the park. A few words of final arrangement then passed, and one by one they leaped the wall, and Alfred Latimer stood within Mallington Park.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE fine old fable of the three warnings represents but too faithfully how the worldly and the gay shut their eyes and bar their understanding against every intimation of the approaching termination of existence, and how frequently such warnings are given and unattended to. Nor is conscience less constant or less varied in the various means she employs to admonish us of the end and tendency of every evil act we commit. Few men, if any, can say that they have fallen into crime unwarned, and most have heard the awakening voice raised in many different tones to call them back from evil unto right. The persevering monitor employs every method, neglects no inducement, and often, very often, at the very last moment thunders in our ears the tale of approaching retribution.

Alfred Latimer, as we have seen in the last chapter, sprang over the paling, and stood within the enclosure of Mallington Park. When he had done so he gazed around him for an instant, and a sudden change came over his countenance. It seemed to him as if he had awakened in a moment from a dream, as if all that had passed during the last week had been a troublous vision, and that now for the first time he unclosed his eyes to the reality. He asked himself where he was, what he was doing, why he came thither; and he seemed confounded and bewildered as his heart answered the question, and he found himself hurrying forward to an act, the consequences of which might be discovery, apprehension, trial, and an ignominious death. He could scarcely

believe it true. All the inducements, all the sophistry, all the passions that had hitherto prompted him seemed to have died away suddenly in the cold night air, and there he stood marked out as a mere robber, without the power of summoning up the evil spirit to support him with false reasonings, and palliate the extent of his guilt.

It was an awful moment, but it was quickly over, for Williams almost instantly touched his arm, saying "Come along, what are you stopping for! You are not going to show the white feather now!"

It might be that he spoke from having at some former time experienced such sensations himself; it might be that he divined what was passing in his young companion's heart by that intuitive perception which some men have into all the modifications of character. However that might be, he undoubtedly addressed himself to the thoughts which were present to Alfred Latimer's mind, and the words he used were those best calculated to negative the effect produced by the newly-raised voice of conscience. The young man merely replied "Oh dear, no!" and followed him instinctively through the nearer trees, across the warren, and towards the back of Mallington Hall. Often had he trod those paths, often had he traversed those woods in happier days. Sometimes he had watched for Lucy there, occasionally with angry feelings at her delay, occasionally with the natural impatience of an eager and impetuous spirit; but he had never felt as he did then—he had never known thought to be such a burden as it seemed during the next five minutes. The load, however, became intolerable, and he cast it off, forcing his mind away, and not daring to own even to himself that which he mentally called a stupid weakness. "Show the white feather!" he repeated to himself more than once. "Oh, no! that's out of the question; but I wish I had not got into this business—there's no use thinking of it, however. Here I am, and it must be done;" and advancing to Williams' side, who was a step or two before, he asked him something in a whisper.

"Hush!" said the depredator, in a low tone; "I thought I heard a whistle;" and creeping slowly on for about a quarter of a mile further, he looked out into the more open part of the park, still keeping himself beneath the shadow of the trees. At some two or three hundred yards' distance was a large clump of old elms, in advance of another portion of the wood, and Williams thought he saw something underneath them. After waiting for a minute he whispered to his companions, "Be ready to be off like a shot!" and then ventured a low whistle. It was answered the next minute, and the form of a man came out for a single instant into the moonlight, then retreated again, and was lost to the eye.

"That was like Maltby, wasn't it!" inquired Williams; and the gruff voice of the man Brown replied, "Ay, that's he."

After a short pause the whistle was repeated in the opposite wood, and Williams observed, "He is coming round. We must show him where we are." Thus saying, he uttered another whistle merely a single note, to which

there was a reply somewhat nearer than before.

"Did you expect him here?" asked Alfred Latimer. "I thought he was to bring up the gig at the corner of the park."

"Ay, but he was to let me know if he heard anything fresh," was the ruffian's answer; and, after waiting for a few moments longer, they plainly heard a rustle in the wood, and the fall of a footstep. Williams put his hand in the pocket of his jacket, and drew out a pistol; but the next instant Malthy's voice was heard inquiring, "Where are you, Williams?"

"Here, here!" answered the other. "Is there any danger ahead?"

"No!" answered Malthy, coming up. "They are all gone quietly to bed; for I've been watching for this last half hour, and saw the lights put out in the different rooms."

"And what's the matter?" inquired Williams, sharply.

"Why, I thought you'd like to know," answered the young man, "that Edmonds sleeps at the house every night; so that unless you get hold of him first you may have a devil of a work."

"Ah!" said Williams, "how did you hear that, Bill?"

"Why, it was old Blackmore told me," answered the young man. "I went down this evening to ask where his son was, for he's never come back to the old place, and the old man took it kind, and was more civil than ordinary. I don't know whether he had any notion that I was in for the other affair that wouldn't answer, and meant to give me a hint that it was no use to try again; but he told me quite of himself without my asking."

"Perhaps it isn't true," said Williams.

"Oh, yes, it is," rejoined the other, "for I went up afterwards to Mother Witherton at the lodge, and I found out from her that Edmonds sleeps in the little room near the library, where he can hear both ways what's going on at each side of the house."

"He shan't hear me tell he sees me," answered Jack Williams, with a laugh; "but we must make him fast first, that's clear. I don't want to hurt him if he'll be quiet and hold his tongue; but, if not, I can't help it. Have you got the flint and steel, Brown? We may as well light the dark lantern, as there's likely to be more work than we thought."

A flint and steel were soon produced from the pocket of the worthy gentleman to whom he last spoke, and the dark lantern was speedily opened, lighted, and closed again.

"Now Bill, run and get the gig; quick, for I am determined this shall go through to-night," continued Williams.

"Haden't you better cross the water with the punt, and start from the other side?" asked Malthy; "I left it on this side on purpose. There are some people still about at Mallington, and if I go rattling over the bridge in the gig I shall be sure to have folks looking at me."

"That's true," answered Williams; "and you're right, Master Bill. You can bring it down at the end of the lane, and then nobody will see it come or go."

This being agreed upon, Malthy slunk away

through the woods again, and his three companions crept silently and stealthily on towards Mallington Hall. When they had reached the point of the wood nearest to the mansion they paused once more and gazed over the whole building. All was dark, however; no window showed a light; and, proceeding from one detached tree to another, they approached nearer and more near till they were within about fifty yards of the outbuildings and enclosed courts at the back of the house.

There was a large old walnut-tree grew close to the wall, and stretched its long and rugged arms over into the stableyard, and, once under its branches, their proceedings were quick and easy. Williams swarmed up the tree in a minute, walked along one of the thick overhanging boughs, and reached the top of the wall. He then aided his two companions to mount, and jumped lightly down upon a pile of straw and rubbish below. The other two descended as rapidly and noiselessly, and then, taking their way across the court, they approached a small door in the main building. Jack Williams had laid his schemes well. Applying the false key to the lock, he turned it with little or no sound, and then feeling for the latch, he raised it, pushed the door open, and listened. Every one held their breath; but all was as silent as the grave, and turning the shade of the lantern, Williams and his companion looked in. Nothing was seen, however, that could alarm them. A long narrow stone passage, with one or two empty tubs lying against the wall, was all that they saw, and Alfred Latimer, now plunged fully in, and knowing that all chance of retreat was out of the question, whispered to Williams, "I will show you the way. I know it well, and can find it in the dark, so you had better shade the lantern again."

"Not yet," said Williams in the same tone; "we may stumble over some of these d—d things in the passages. There is no one here to see, and in the great hall we shall get the moonlight through the windows, I should think."

Without reply, Alfred Latimer passed him and went on, drawing one of the pistols from his pocket, however, and cocking it.

"He's a bold young devil," murmured Jack Williams to himself as he followed, while Tom Brown came behind in silence. Thus proceeding they reached the end of that passage, turned into another at the left, and mounted three or four steps, for the house was built upon an irregular foundation. They then passed between the kitchen and servants' hall, the butler's pantry, and what was called the still-room, beyond which came a pair of folding-doors covered with baize, and having a stone staircase on the left hand. Here, however, they were brought to a sudden stop, for the folding-doors were bolted on the other side.

"Come up here," said Alfred Latimer. "This leads into the corridor above, then we can get down by the great stairs to the room where Edmonds sleeps."

"Better be at the plate-room at once," murmured Tom Brown.

"No, no!" replied Williams sharply, "that would ruin us altogether. We should have the women ringing the bell, and the man upon our backs. We must secure them all first; but let

as put the crape over our faces, for there's no need of his knowing who we are."

This was soon done; and Alfred Latimer, when he gazed through the dull veil that was spread over his eyes and fastened behind his head at the countenances of his two companions, similarly disguised, fancied that it was impossible any one should recognize them. Then, after having taken off their shoes, the whole party mounted the stairs quietly, and passing along the corridor above, descended by the great staircase to the hall. All was still silent and tranquil, but when, passing through a passage at the back of the library, they approached a door at the end, they thought they heard a noise, and they stopped, Jack Williams approaching Alfred Latimer's side, ready to spring like a tiger upon any one who might come forth.

As they listened, however, the hard regular breathing of some one in a profound sleep was heard, and Williams whispered, "He's as sound as a hedgehog; but if he should wake, is there any other door to the room?"

"None that I know of," answered Latimer, without raising his voice.

"Then I'll soon send this one in if it should be fastened," rejoined Williams. "Here, Tom, hold the lantern while we try."

Poor Edmonds, however, had not taken the trouble to lock his door, and it opened easily at the first touch. The light of the lantern spread faintly round the chamber, showing to the eyes of the criminals the whole of the scene within. Edmonds was lying on the half tester bed on the other side of the room, partly but not wholly undressed, with his head pillowed on his arm, and still asleep. The slight sound of the opening door did not fully waken him; but either that noise or the light of the lantern caused him to turn somewhat on the bed and murmur a few indistinct words to himself. At this movement Williams suddenly drew a rope from his pocket, and sprang forward. Alfred Latimer followed, and both threw themselves upon the poor fellow, as he was starting up, roused by the noise they made. He was, as we have said, a powerful man, and he struggled for an instant vehemently with his assailants; but it was in vain he did so; and before he could put forth one half of his strength, he was overpowered, and his arms pinioned tightly behind. Not a word was spoken on either part; for Edmonds well knew that it was in vain to call for help, and the other two were not anxious that their voices should be heard. When the struggle was over, the park-keeper stood before his two opponents, gazing upon them sternly, while Alfred Latimer pushed the crape farther up over his forehead, from which it had been partly removed, and Williams laughed low, though perhaps with better feelings than might be supposed, for his triumph was more that he had succeeded without unnecessary violence, than that he had overcome in a contest where the odds were so greatly on his side. The man Brown stood dully at the door, with the lantern in one hand and a pistol in the other, quite ready to use the latter, if by any chance Edmonds had obtained even a temporary advantage.

"Well, my men, well!" exclaimed the park-

keeper at length; but then suddenly he stopped, and, after a brief pause, added "But it's of no use—the game's up. It signifies not asking questions, or saying a word. I'm helpless now."

Neither Williams nor Alfred Latimer replied, but the former drew the latter aside, and whispered. "Stay you here and keep guard over him, sir," he said. "I can trust you, and you can trust me. But that fellow Brown, we cannot be sure of him, if our eyes are off him; and he is not unlikely to kick at us going over the house alone. Will you stay?"

He spoke eagerly and anxiously, and though the young man disliked the task, and would rather have had a share in anything more active, he replied, "Well, I will stay; but do not be long—you know where the women sleep. I should not wonder if all this noise had wakened them."

"No fear, no fear!" answered Williams; "but I will light the candle first;" and taking up the candlestick from the table, he carried it to the lantern, saying to Brown, after he had secured to Alfred Latimer the means of seeing while away, "come, my lad, we will go, while he remains on guard."

"Come along," answered Brown, in a louder tone than needful; and leaving the captive and his guard together, the two hurried along the passage and up the stairs to the top of the house. Williams had already made himself aware of the room in which the old housekeeper slept, and he was not long in finding it; but as he went he looked round for the rope of the alarm bell, which he at length found passing along the wall of the corridor through the flooring to the story below.

"Stand fast by that, Tom," he said; "and if the other woman comes while I am securing this one, seize her tight."

He then advanced to the door, and turned the handle; but it was locked, and a voice immediately demanded, in the accents of terror, "Who is there?"

"It's I—Edmonds," said the man, counterfeiting as well as he could the tone of the park-keeper; but without waiting for reply, he set his broad shoulder against the slight door, stretched his foot out to the other side of the narrow passage, and with this purchase pushed against the woodwork with all his strength. There came immediately a crashing sound, as of breaking wood, and then a shrill scream, evidently from two voices.

"Here, Tom!" exclaimed Williams, "they are both in here, bring the light!" and while Brown hurried up he applied his strength again with another effort, and the door was burst violently into the room.

Another shriek instantly succeeded; but Williams exclaimed fiercely, "Silence, or you shall pay for it with your lives! No one is going to hurt you if you keep still; but if either of you say a word more, or offer to stir, I will blow your brains out. Have you got any cord?" he continued, turning to his companion. "Tie that one while I do the same for this—silence, I say, if you would live a minute longer!" and calmly and deliberately he fastened the housemaid's arms behind her, while Brown, seating down the lantern, did the same office for the terrified old housekeeper.

"Now bring them along into another room," said Williams; "this door won't keep them in, and if they get out they'll be at the bell with their teeth, if not with their hands."

"I won't indeed, Mr. Robber," sobbed poor Mrs. Chalke; "that I won't. Take all I have, and spare my life. I'll do nothing at all, but be as quiet as a mouse."

"Silence!" said Williams, sternly; "bring them along, my lad. We'll make sure of them, and, dragged along the passage, the two trembling women were taken to a room looking to the park side of the house, where they were thrust in, and the door locked upon them."

"Now, Tom, to the plate-room," said Williams; so far all is right."

"Ha, ha!" cried Brown, with a joyful laugh, "this is capital!" and away they both hurried down the first flight of stairs to the large corridors and spacious rooms of the best sleeping floor.

"The room at the end," said Williams, thoughtfully, as if repeating a lesson he had learned. "It must be that one just over where the man slept;" and walking straight forward to the end of the long passage which ran between a long range of bed-chambers on either side, with occasional intervals to admit the light from the west, he paused opposite to a strong plated door at the further extremity.

"Here it is!" he said, gazing at it, and holding the lantern to the heavy lock. "It will be no easy job to get in, I fancy—I'll try the pick-locks first, however."

Thus saying, he took out the bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried one after the other without any success till the last was used, when the bolt of the lock was forced back. To the surprise of both the men, however, the door remained fast; and after some further examination, they discovered another keyhole higher up. On that the pick-locks proved ineffectual, and the small bar of steel which Williams had brought with him was next employed. Pressed between the door and the post, just opposite the refractory lock, it soon wrenched back a part of the iron plating, and tore off a portion of the wood. A large splinter was then forced away, showing the lock firmly shot into the plate opposite; but with the swallow-tailed end of the crow Williams contrived to push it back, and then, thrusting a hook into the keyhole, pulled the door open with ease. A number of large chests hooped with iron stood before them, but these offered no very serious impediment. Some were opened with the skeleton keys, others broken into with the crow-bar, and a far greater quantity of that sordid dross for which men so often risk their soul's salvation was exposed to their eyes than even their greedy hopes had ventured to expect.

"There, give me the bags," cried Williams; "he has got some more below, run and fetch them. We will only take what is most worth while, for there is more here than we can carry."

"Let us take all we can," said Brown; "I can carry a good deal, and we may as well fill our pockets and the bags, too," and thus saying he thrust his hand into a box where a number of guineas appeared piled up in regular rows, and grasped as many as he could.

"Hark!" cried Williams suddenly, and at the same moment the report of a pistol rang through the house. Williams snatched up the lantern; and, hurrying out, both ran down stairs as fast as they could.

CHAPTER LXVII.

We must now, dear reader, return for a short space to the room below, where we left Alfred Latimer and Edmonds, the park-keeper, in order to explain the cause of that unexpected sound which disturbed Williams and his companion in their course of pillage. No task, perhaps, could have been inflicted upon the unhappy young man more painful than that which he had undertaken to perform. Activity was at that moment a need; it was the only means of shutting out thought; it was the only veil which could hide from his own eyes the sight of what he had become. He felt that he was a felon; that the great moral Rubicon was passed; that the barrier had fallen behind him which for ever excluded him from a return to society; that all he had done before was light and venial compared with the deed of that night. But he would fain not have pondered upon his state; he would have hurried on in any course to escape reflection; he would even have willingly plunged into new crimes to escape from the dark impression of the one he had committed. It may seem strange that such should be the effect of remorse, but such is always the case when remorse is without repentance; and repentance is not either the fear of earthly punishment, or the consciousness of guilt; it is the deep and overpowering sorrow of the believer for having offended God. Remorse without repentance is despair. Such was what Alfred Latimer felt. He never thought of his offence to God. He was conscious of guilt; but he looked to no repentance—to no atonement—to no reformation. It was in relation to its effects upon himself, and in that alone he considered the crime he had committed; and with the spirit of Cain, he was ready to insult the Almighty by any new crime with sullen daring, from the very sense of the depth to which he had fallen. The hardening of the heart which so frequently follows wickedness, is surely a natural part of its punishment.

But there he stood condemned to inactivity, keeping guard over one whom he had already injured, and whom he hated because he had injured him. He glared at him through the black crape that covered his face with feelings difficult to describe—fierce, yet dull—ferocious, yet, in some degree, timid. He was angry with him for keeping him there, though it was not poor Edmonds's fault, and, with all the sophistry of the criminal heart, he went on in the same spirit to pile accusations in his own thoughts upon the other's head, striving to cast off a part of the burden of his guilt upon any other person in order to free himself from its overpowering weight.

"Ay," he thought, "curse him! if it had not been for him I should not have been what I now am. I should never have done this thing—I should not have been here at all. If he had not refused to let me marry Lucy when I offered

honorably, all would have been right. My mother might have made a piece of work at first, but that would have soon blown by, and Louisa would have helped us—I know she would—and we should have all been comfortable. And now what has come of his cursed obstinacy and ill-temper. Here I shall very likely get hanged, and I dare say he would help to convict me. I wonder if he suspects anything! He looks at me devilish hard."

He longed to question the poor fellow, but did not dare to speak, though he thought once or twice that he could disguise his voice, so as not to sound familiar to Edmonds's ears. He hesitated, however, standing half way between the bed and the door, with the cocked pistol in his hand, and his eyes fixed upon his prisoner.

After waiting thus for about three or four minutes, while Edmonds remained sitting on the edge of the bed, still half bewildered with all that had just taken place, there came a crash as of breaking wood, and then a shrill scream. Voices were next heard speaking, and then some shrieks louder and more distinct than before. Edmonds started up, and advanced a step, exclaiming, "The bloody villains are hurting the poor women—a set of scoundrels!"

Alfred Latimer pointed the pistol at him, saying, in a feigned voice, "Keep back, or I'll blow your brains out;" and Edmonds paused, with his eyes fixed upon him, longing to spring forward and wrench the weapon from his hands, but feeling but too painfully how vain would be the attempt with his pinioned arms. The shrieks ceased, and all that could be heard was the sound of several voices speaking—some in the tones of supplication, some in those of menace or command. A woman's tongue, however, could be distinguished, and, as if relieved, the park-keeper sat down again, and bent his head thoughtfully. Alfred Latimer was well pleased with this change of attitude, for he did not like to have the eyes of Lucy's father fixed upon him; but still the question recurred to his mind, "I wonder if he suspects me!"

Shortly after, steps were heard above, and then, after a pause, came again a grating crash just over their heads, then another, and then a dull creaking sound, as of a door moving on hinges long disused. Edmonds seemed uneasy, and moved once or twice upon the side of the bed.

"They have broken into the plate room," he said at length, looking at Alfred Latimer again; "that's what they came for; and they've got it; but they'll all be hanged, that's one comfort."

The young man gazed at him fiercely; but remained silent, and after a minute or two had elapsed, during which time the various sounds of moving and breaking into the chests were heard below, the park-keeper spoke again—"They'll all be hanged, that's certain," he repeated, "for they are all known, and will be caught before to-morrow's over."

"Do you mean to say you know them, fool?" demanded Latimer, in a feigned voice, taking at the same time a step towards him.

"To be sure I do," replied Edmonds, rising,

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and confronting him boldly, and with a flashing eye. "It is you who are the fools, to think that a trumpery piece of crape would hide you."

Alfred Latimer trembled, but it was not with fear. "Who are they, then?" he demanded, grasping the pistol tighter in his hand.

"Why, Williams and the ruffian Brown," replied Edmonds at once, "they are clear enough."

"And I," said Alfred Latimer, in a very low tone, "who am I?"

"I know you well enough," answered the park-keeper, in a voice of deep sadness, "I wish to heaven I didn't."

"Speak! speak!" said the young man; "Who am I?"

"Why, one, bad as I believed him, whom I never thought to see at work like this," replied Edmonds; "the destroyer of my child."

The young man instantly raised the pistol as if to shoot him; but the sturdy park-keeper's eyes did not even wink, and he continued to gaze upon him sternly. Suddenly the youth dropped the muzzle again, saying, with an ill-feigned laugh, "You are mistaken. You have seen me often I know, but I am not the man you think. I am—I could tell you who; but I won't."

"It's no use, Mr. Latimer," answered Edmonds; "it's no use at all. I know you just as well as if your face were uncovered. I wish to heaven, I say, that I did not. You looked just now as if you were going to shoot me. I don't care a straw if you do. You have broken my heart, and made life a load; so finish all by taking it if you will. You have murdered my child's soul; you can but kill my body, as the Bible says."

The young man stared at him for an instant; then strode up to his side, and grasped him with his left hand by the shoulder, saying, in his natural voice, but low and stern, "Will you swear, so help you God, not to betray me!—will you, for Lucy's sake, if not for mine?"

"No!" replied Edmonds, in a resolute tone. "I think you as great a villain as ever lived, and far worse than the other two. Why should I punish them and not you?"

"Will you swear to give no information till this time to-morrow night?" asked Alfred Latimer, with a shaking voice. "Will you swear, man—will you swear? for if not, you must die, and my hand must stop your tongue."

Edmonds paused a single instant; but the next his own stout heart called him a coward even for that brief hesitation. "No," he said, "I will not. I will do my duty at once, and directly. I will neither tell a lie, nor consent to robbery, for any man on earth."

"But till to-morrow night," repeated Alfred Latimer, raising the pistol to the man's head. "Will you swear, till to-morrow night?"

"No, I won't," replied the park-keeper, setting his teeth close. "Make yourself a murderer if you will, as a robber and a deceiver."

The finger was pressed hard upon the trigger—the cock of the pistol fell—there was a flash and a report, and poor Edmonds staggered forward. "Oh, God!—Lucy!" he cried, and then fell forward upon the floor, with his feet beating the ground convulsively for a moment, as if which all was still.

Alfred Latimer's arm dropped by his side the moment the deed was done; and there he stood gazing upon the dead man, while a stream of crimson blood flowed from amongst his hair and wandered slowly over the boards. Who that has not committed such a crime can tell the feelings which filled the murderer's bosom as he gazed? It was no rash blow, stricken in the midst of strife and rage—it was a calm deliberate act, perpetrated on one in his power, one who could not resist. There was no extenuating circumstance—nothing to palliate it—nothing to justify it, even to the lying heart of self. It was done from fear of discovery and punishment; it was cowardly as base, and base as cruel. He felt it all—the magnitude of the offence, all its dark and terrible character—and for an instant his brain seemed to reel, his senses to be troubled, reason to be shaken on her throne. He would have fled anywhere; he would have done anything; he would have sought any refuge—the grave itself—to fly from that horrible consciousness. He thought suddenly of the other pistol, and drew it forth to raise it against his own life, but at that instant rapid steps were heard running down from above; he put the weapon up again, and it was just concealed when his two companions rushed into the room.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

The moment Williams entered the room he stopped short, gazing at the dead man; and Alfred Latimer instantly stepped up to him, saying, in a low tone, "I could not help it. He drove me to do it."

"Speak out, speak out!" cried Williams. "There's no use of whispering now. He can't hear you, man, that's clear enough. I'd have given a great deal, though, that this had not happened. What did he do?"

"He told me that he knew us all, and that he would inform."

"That might be all stuff," replied Williams, with a stern brow. "I don't think he could know us."

"Ay, but he named every one of us," answered Alfred Latimer, eager to palliate the deed even to his ruffian companions. "I could scarcely get him to name me, though he mentioned you and Brown outright at first. But he told me who I was plainly enough in the end."

"It could not be helped, then," said Williams. "It was his own fault; but I think I'd have tried to swear him to secrecy. He'd have kept his oath if he had taken it."

"I did try, I did try!" replied the young man, "but he refused—ay, even when the pistol was at his head he swore he would tell all the moment he was free. So I thought there was no use of waiting for you to do what I could do without you, and I fired."

"Served him devilish well right!" murmured Brown, but Williams was silent for several minutes, and he evidently regretted what had taken place, although he said, in the end, "Well, there was no help for it. If a man will be such a fool, he must take the consequences; and when a man's to be hanged for a robbery, they can't do worse to him for a murder. Yet I like

the fellow's pluck, too; but the worst of pistols is, they make such a devil of a noise. It might be heard a good way off, in the stillness of such a night as this. Run to the round window, Tom; there's no shutter, and you can see well enough by the moonlight, over towards the keeper's cottage. Look out, and let us know if there's anybody coming."

"Don't go up to the plate-room till I'm back," answered Brown, always fearful of losing part of the money.

"No nonsense!" cried Williams, sternly. "Do as you are bid, and do not give me any of your insolence, or he shan't long lie there singly," and he pointed to the body of Edmonds.

The other ruffian was cowed and walked away, and Williams, turning towards Alfred Latimer, gazed at him for a moment as he stood with his arms folded, his brows knit, and a look of deep bitter gloom upon his face. The impression of his crime was spreading over him more and more darkly every moment. The heart of Cain was in his bosom, the curse of Cain upon his head. Some of the words of his companion, too, even in justifying the deed he had committed, had presented it in its blackest colors to his mind. He had heard it called murder. He had heard the courage and stern resolution, even to death, of the man he had slain applauded, and every thing seemed to force upon him the most horrible view of the act of his hands. He stood there brooding gloomily over his own crime, till at length Williams, who divined in some degree what was passing in his breast, interrupted his reverie by saying, "Come, Mr. Latimer, it can't be helped. It was his own fault. He would have it, and so he got it. It was very easy for him to say he wouldn't tell, and your life is as good to you as his, so you had no choice. Your only way now is to make poor Lucy all the better husband."

Alfred Latimer suddenly put his hand to his head, as if some terrible pang shot through his brain; but the moment after he answered, "So I will, so I will. But will she ever see me again after this?"

"Pooh! nonsense," cried Williams; "abe will know nothing about it. Her father's death was necessary to her husband's safety, and if we are not fools ourselves there's no chance of how it happened ever reaching her ears. Come, let us be off, and get what we can. There's a devil of a deal more money than I thought for. So perhaps it will be better to leave the plate behind. I like your resolution, sir, in settling the affair with this poor fellow yourself. Many a man, and a brave man, too, would have waited for us to come down; but there's nothing like being decided in these matters. We won't leave him there, however. Let us put him on the bed."

Thus saying, he took the corpse by the shoulders, and, though unwillingly, Alfred Latimer did not like to refuse to bear a part; so, lifting the body of poor Edmonds between them, they laid him on the bed where he had been sleeping, and then turned towards the door.

"I wonder where that fellow, Brown, can be," said Williams. "Why, you have got your self all over blood, Mr. Latimer. But never

mind, come along, you can have Brown's smock-frock till we change your things."

Thus saying, he led the way out of the room and up the stairs again towards the plate-room, where the lantern had been left burning on the floor. They found Brown at the door, and though some sharp words passed between him and Williams, they did not discover whether he had been in the room or not. They entered, however, and the sight of all the wealth that the late Earl of Mallington had there accumulated soon drove, from the thoughts of Williams at least, all memory of the deed that had been done below. Alfred Latimer, less accustomed to scenes of blood, was longer in recovering himself at all; but when a change did take place it ran into a greater extreme, and became the sort of wild intoxication of despair. He talked, he even laughed, when loading himself with the money and the trinkets they found. His words were wild and whirling, it is true, like those of a man half inebriated; but Williams encouraged him to go on, sometimes by a jest and a light speech, sometimes by representing the sort of fierce decision which he had shown as the brightest of all qualities in the course before them, so that at length the young man did not feel sure that the bloody deed he had committed was not a great act.

It was speedily decided that all the heavier articles of plate should be left, and in about a quarter of an hour after their return to the plate-room they had possessed themselves of even a larger booty than they expected. When this was done they descended to the hall again, and Williams said, "I will go and put out that light."

"A devil of a deal better just pop it to the curtains of the bed," said Brown; "then there would be one grand blaze, and the whole job would be over, and no one know anything about it."

"No," said Williams, sternly, "that's needless. The women don't know us, and there's no use of hurting them. No more of such stuff, Master Brown; you've made me devilish angry more than once to-night, and the next time you shall feel it."

There was a flashing of his eye that was not to be mistaken, and Brown remained silent, while the other entered the room where poor Edmonds lay, and blew out the candle. They then threaded the various passages of the house by the light they carried till they reached the door by which they had entered. There the lantern was also extinguished, and issuing out into the yard, they easily got over the wall into the open ground of the park. Taking for some way the course they had pursued in coming, they kept among the trees as far as possible, till, turning towards the river, they were obliged once or twice to cross the clear spaces in the park.

All was still and silent, however, the clear moon shining calm and peacefully over the glades and dells, not a sound but the whispering of the light breeze among the trees and the fern, no sight of a living thing but when they startled a herd of deer or roused a hare to scamper away in the moonlight. Nothing could form a stronger contrast than the scene without, in its clear, cool, lustrous tranquillity, with the fierce and

agitating passions within the bosoms of those unhappy men. They seemed to feel it each in their degree, and they all remained perfectly silent, till at length, when they came among the trees by the river side, Williams stopped and proposed to Brown that he should give his smock-frock to Alfred Latimer. The inferior ruffian, however, did not choose to part with it without compensation, and exacted a guinea as the price of the garment. Williams swore at him, and Alfred Latimer felt inclined to strike him, for there was an insolent familiarity in his tone which showed him painfully how he himself had sunk. There was no help for it, however, and, paying the money, he took the smock-frock and drew it over his other dress, which had before been altered, as we have said, to make him look as much like a countryman as possible. Approaching the little creek where poor Lucy had been carried not long before, they now looked out for the punt, which they found lying quietly at the bank. As they got in, however, what between agitation and the load he carried, Alfred Latimer stumbled and his hat fell into the river. Brown, who was already in the boat, strove to catch it with the pole, but in so doing he pressed it down and it filled and sank.

"That's devilish unlucky!" cried Williams; "what's to be done now?"

"Why, I must go home," said Alfred Latimer, "and change my dress altogether. I can put these things away where nobody will find them, and one of the girls of the house, I dare say, will let me in—at all events, I can get up one of the windows; I know how, I've done it before."

"You must be quick, then," said Williams, as they pushed away into the stream, "for we must be far off before daylight, and it's past twelve now."

"Past twelve!" cried Alfred Latimer. "I thought it was two or three."

"Ay, but these things are sooner done than you think of," answered Williams. "There's Maltby, I fancy, standing on the shore. We'll wait for you at the cottage, by the common, where you took Lucy, if you will run up the back lanes to the house. Only don't be long, and mind you stow away the things where they can't be found."

"No fear, no fear," replied Latimer; and the boat pushed on to the bank, where the form of Bill Maltby became more and more distinct, as they approached. The horse and gig, however, were not to be seen, though at that spot the road which ran along that bank of the river came close to the water's edge; and Williams's first salutation to his accomplice was an inquiry as to the cause of this deficiency.

"Hush!" said Maltby; "don't speak loud. Harry Soames has got a warrant against you, Jack, and learning that you were at the Hog-in-Armour, farther down, he's gone to see if he can nab you. He doesn't want, that's the fact, but he was obliged to go down, and so he told me all about it, when I met him. I took the horse up to the back of the common, and there left him and the gig, because Harry must come back this way. He'll be half an hour first, however, so there's plenty of time; but still we had better be off as quick as possible."

"We're a match for him if he does come," answered Williams, stepping out of the boat; "but there's no use risking anything, or breaking a man's head if one can help it. So let us start. Fasten the boat, Tom—there, hook it on to that stump. That will do. Now, sir, don't be long, for we can't wait above three quarters of an hour."

"You had better not wait at all," said Maltby, "for the place is all in a bustle. They say there's a warrant out against that swell cove, Mr. Morton, too, who the fools fancy had a hand in the last business up at the hall. They say he's nothing but a lawyer's clerk, run away with his master's money."

"Pooh!" cried Williams—"come along—he be quick, sir, be quick."

Alfred Latimer turned away without reply, and hurried up the lane towards Mallington House. He paused not for an instant, for dread and anxiety were behind and drove him on; but yet he could not go so fast that thought did not catch him. The scenes of his boyhood and his youth were all around him; and in a few minutes the house where all the brightest memories of early years were stored rose before his eyes. "What had he not cast away!" he asked himself, as he saw it standing out in the calm moonlight, "What had he not lost? Peace, station, friends, esteem, perhaps life, were all gone. Fury, passion, dark remorse, haggard despair were thenceforth to be the fell companions of his way, tearing his heart with their iron fangs as he went." Ere he could stop the reproachful voice from within memory seemed in a moment to present to his eyes all that he had done amiss through life; the awkwardness of boyhood, the obstinacy and violence of after years, the vices and follies of early manhood. Oh! how he wished that he had been different—that he had listened to warnings—endured reproof—followed good counsel—seized the opportunity of amendment whenever it was offered—repented ere it was too late. So it is with every one who does wrong. Sooner or later a time comes when the better heart, plunged in dark despair, sums up the goodness of God cast away, and asks, with fruitless longing, "Can these things never come again?"

He was half frenzied at the thought; but still dread of detection, shame, punishment were even stronger than despair; and at a spot where he had often passed before on some wild frolic, he leaped the garden wall and approached the house.

The means that he employed to procure entrance have been already detailed; but, between the time of his seeing Louisa above, and of her coming down to give him admission, a dark and shameful scheme suggested itself to his mind, which he proceeded to put in execution. The fiend called Fear drives man but too frequently to darker crimes than any other passion, and as Alfred Latimer stood there by the door the words which Maltby had used in regard to Mr. Morton recurred to his remembrance. "I will put these clothes in his room," he thought, "if they fancied he had something to do with the other attendant upon the hall, they may suspect him about this, and that will give me time to get off." A consciousness of the

terrible baseness of his design came over him, even while such ideas passed through his mind, but the means of glossing over any crime that Satan prompts are never wanting, and he went on to palliate that which he was determined to perform, saying, "He will soon be able to prove himself innocent. It can but be a day or two in prison to him, and it might be death and destruction to me."

At that moment the door was opened, and he went in, hurrying past Louisa, as we have said, and seeking his own room in the first place, when he stripped off the attire in which he had come thither, and clothed himself from head to foot in a fresh and unstained dress. Then, after disposing of the money somewhat better about his person than he had done before, he gathered up the bloody clothes, tied them together, and carrying them into Morton's room, put them cunningly away at the far back part of an open door. Crime never remembers every precaution, however, and in the trepidation and gloom of his mind he forgot more than one. But without pausing to do more than we have said, he hurried away, descended to Louisa's room, and held some conversation with her through the door, as we have before mentioned. Thence, descending to the hall, he issued out once again into the garden, whence, after walking through the shrubberies and leaping over the wall, he pursued his way to the common, where, at the appointed spot, he found his companions waiting with the horse and gig.

Williams had grown impatient, and was upon the very eve of setting off, when Alfred Latimer made his appearance. "Here, jump in," he cried. "There is room enough for us three, and it doesn't much signify if we break the horse's wind, for we must kill him, and break the gig to pieces, to prevent them telling tales of how we went. Maltby's got his money, Mr. Latimer, so you owe me a hundred pounds. I've paid him for all. He's to do the business with Levi, too, and has sworn upon his honor to send us the money when we tell him where, so you had better give him the rings and bracelets and stuff that you've got about you, for they only tell tales."

Alfred Latimer silently did what he was directed, and having placed himself somewhat inconveniently between Williams and Brown, the horse received a lash from the whip, and started off along the road over the hills. He was a strong, high-spirited, bony animal, who had been ill used, and rendered unfit for anything but the sort of work upon which he was now employed. But the goodness of his original breeding was still manifest, and he would have dropped down dead sooner than give up. On they went, then, at a furious pace, up hill and down dale for about seven miles, when at the side of the road they saw a post-chaise broken down, and with one of the wheels off, standing by the side of the road. The horses and the driver were gone, and as the party in the gig were not upon an expedition of pleasure, they paused not to examine what was the nature of the accident, but dashed past as fast as they could go. At length, upon the rise of the highest bill, which was about twelve miles from Mallington, Williams, who was driving, pulled in

the horse a little, and let him take it more leisurely.

"They can't catch us now," he said; "and it would not do to have him break down before we are near the town."

The rest of their journey consequently occupied more time, so that it was nearly four o'clock in the morning when they came within three miles of the place to which their steps tended.

Williams then pulled up altogether, saying, "There should be a chalk-pit here, Mr. Latimer, I think."

"It's further on," answered the young man; "I've seen it once or twice as we have passed coming close to the side of the road."

"What the devil do you want a chalk-pit for?" asked Tom Brown. "I can't make out what you are up to!"

"To put the horse and gig in, to be sure," replied Williams. "What would you have us do with them, you fool. We can't send them back without showing which way we came; and if we were to leave them at the inn while we go on to the sea, it would soon set all the people talking."

"But how are we to get on?" asked Brown.

"Walk, to be sure," answered Williams. "Ay, and we must go all the way round, too, and come in by the other side. That will just fill up the time, for I don't want to come to the inn before daylight. Then we are to be a wedding party, you know. The marriage won't take above ten minutes; and then Mr. Latimer can set off in a chaise with his lady, and we can follow immediately after. It will be the best b'ind that we could have, so it all turns out lucky. But I'll tell you all about it, and what you are to do, Tom, when we get to the inn."

Alfred Latimer had remained as silent as the grave while his marriage was named; but after a pause, during which Williams whipped the horse on, he asked in a low voice, almost a whisper, "Won't all this marriage delay us too long! It can't take place till nine o'clock."

"Oh dear, no," answered Williams, carelessly. "They'll not find out anything of the job at the hall till seven or eight, then they'll have to carry the news to the magistrates, and then there will be all the fuss and bustle of taking evidence and examining the premises; so that they will not start after us till eleven or twelve, even if their suspicions lead them this way, which is not at all likely. I'd bet a crown they go to Sturton first, and spend half the day there. They know of your being here, sir; but as they have no reason to believe you have anything to do with it, and the only people left living to tell—I mean the old women—saw no one but Brown and me, there's every chance in life that they will take any road but the right one, especially if the horse and gig are not heard of for some time. Ay, there's the pit; I see the railing."

The chalk-pit, close by which Williams stopped the minute after, was a deep excavation which had been carried, as Latimer had said, close to the side of the road—even closer, indeed, than modern road surveyors would permit. When it could be brought no further in that direction, which was the one wherein the chalk

was the best, the excavation had ceased, though, as the stratum was deep, not before it had been carried down some fifty or sixty feet perpendicular. The only thing which formed a barrier between this pit and the road was a frail old wooden railing, decayed with time and weather, and towards this slight obstacle Williams, as soon as he and his companions had got out of the gig, turned the back of the vehicle, then suddenly reining the horse back he jammed the two wheels violently against the bar. The rotten wood-work gave way in a moment, and the wheels rolling over the edge dragged the horse back upon his haunches. He made a violent effort to save himself, but a sudden jerk of the bridle in his mouth threw him back, and over he went sheer down to the bottom. A wild sort of scream came up as the poor animal fell, and Williams, saying coolly "there, that's done," walked on with his two companions.

CHAPTER LXIX.

It was in the pretty little church of St. Stephen the Martyr, in the town of —, at nine o'clock in the morning precisely, that the clergyman of the place waited calmly in his surplice near the door of the vestry. He was a middle-aged man, with some appearance of good living about his well-filled close-shaven cheeks; and, to say the truth, as his usual breakfast hour was nine, and he had put it off for half an hour to perform the ceremony to which he was called, he heartily wished that the pair about to be united in holy matrimony would appear. I do not exactly know, and will not take upon me to say, that had he thought their eagerness would have rendered such a step expedient, he might not have been induced to give the hands of the clock a certain degree of uncanonical rapidity: thinking it a very venial sin, if "felons hang that jurymen may dine," to give a little acceleration to the hour which was to tie two people in a softer band, especially when his own breakfast was waiting.

It was a very pretty church, as I have said, built in the style of other days, with numerous round arches and deep mouldings, such as Normans loved; and the worthy rector was, indeed, somewhat proud of it, taking much pleasure in pointing out to occasional visitors the various grotesque figures which ornamented different parts of the building—tending certainly not much to edification in its usual sense—and decanting learnedly upon the styles which were to be remarked in this place or that, and sometimes moralizing a little over the dust of the many generations which had passed away since the hands that reared the edifice had mouldered in the grave. But, on the present occasion, with an empty stomach, the worthy clergyman was not at all disposed for such exhortations. He had royal authority for thinking that "it is bad talking between a full man and a fasting;" and therefore when, the minute after the clock of the church had struck the hour, he saw two gentlemen—one in clerical attire—enter through the half-open door, he immediately retreated into the vestry, saying to himself "They are

be come to see the church; but they must wait if they want me to explain things to them."

As he stood within the vestry door, he heard a few words pass between the clerk and the strangers, and then the creaking of a pew. The rector was somewhat puzzled; but the minute after the clerk appeared and nodded his head with a solemn inclination, to announce that some, at least, of the wedding party had arrived. The rector then came forth and perceived nearest to the communion table a young man somewhat pale, and with a wild and haggard eye, dressed in fashionable attire, with an older man by his side, stout, dark, and apparently somewhat inferior in station to himself, while through the door of the church were seen coming a fair young girl, leaning on the arm of a respectable looking old man dressed in his best, in whom the rector instantly recognized one of his own parishioners. He was, as we have shown, in no humor for asking many questions; but still, as, upon the whole, he was a conscientious person, before he proceeded to perform his functions he drew the good gardener aside, and addressed some inquiries to him. What the other answered matters not much; but the rector was satisfied, and advanced again, saying, "Oh! very well." The clerk arranged the parties in order, and the ceremony proceeded. To those who looked on, and knew not what was passing in the breast of any there present, it presented few incidents at all remarkable. The rector, indeed, observed that the bridegroom acted as a mere automaton in the hands of those around him—that he sometimes made the responses aloud, sometimes murmured something, which might be assent or not, for no one could hear what it was—that his eye looked wild, and that once or twice he turned, and gazed over his shoulder. But as forced marriages, by parochial or other authority, were very common in those days, the clergyman concluded that in this case the young gentleman had been forced by the friends of the bride to do her justice, when he was otherwise inclined, and that the act was not at all a pleasant one to him. The only objection he could see to this supposition was a momentary indication of affection, which the bridegroom had displayed towards the fair trembling being who was so soon to be united to him by a holy tie, as they came near the communion table, when he suddenly grasped her hand, and murmured, "Dear Lucy," in a tone full of melancholy but of deep feeling. The rector also remarked that when he was reading the warning to confess if there were any impediment to their marriage, the bridegroom, at the words, "As ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed," turned deadly pale, and seemed to stagger where he stood. The concluding words, therefore, were pronounced in a more solemn and urgent tone; but they produced no further effect. The banns had been regularly published, and the ceremony went on to its close.

But had the eye of man been able to penetrate the human heart, and see all the dark things that it contains, what a terrible scene would have been disclosed by the bosom of Alfred Latimer. There he stood before the altar with

the only woman he had ever loved, with the only woman towards whom, perhaps, he had ever entertained one purer or higher feeling. He had loved her notwithstanding all the wrong he had done her, notwithstanding all the evil he had inflicted, notwithstanding the misery and wretchedness which he was ready, either from caprice or passion, to inflict upon her afterwards; nay, more, he loved her still, and the very desolation of his heart, the feelings of despair that had seized upon him, made him cling to her affection—made him feel that it was the only thing left to him in existence—made him look upon it as a ray of comfort in the midst of the utter darkness that surrounded him. He stood with her before the altar, but under what circumstances? With her father's murder upon his head—his cold deliberate murder—with the blood of him who gave her being still hot and reeking upon his hand—with the image still present to his eyes of her parent lying before him, struggling in the agonies of death. When her hand clasped his it seemed as if it scorched him with the touch; the fire of hell seemed to spread along every nerve, and flow through every vein, and when the awful adjuration of the priest was pronounced, calling up the vague images of death and judgment, and eternal condemnation, and the opening of the book in which all the dire secrets of humanity stand recorded, it seemed as if the everlasting doom was already ringing in his ears—as if the Almighty fiat had gone forth of unchanging torture and despair.

Yet he went on, yet he struggled up, yet he would not abandon the purpose of making her his. It seemed to him as if for her sake he had done all this, as if for that consummation he had loaded his soul with guilt and brought down judgment on his head. It was but a vague impression that would not bear examination; but like one of those deep and heavy mists that do not exclude all light, but yet cut off the view of everything but themselves, it settled thick and obscure around him. He fancied it was so, and that was enough; that it was all to end in this—that all that had gone before was but as steps leading to this conclusion, and she seemed to grow dearer to him than she had ever been before from the contrast between her love and all that surrounded it.

The ceremony was as briefly got over as possible, not a word more was said than was absolutely necessary; but when it came to an end Alfred Latimer seemed scarcely to know that it had concluded. The monosyllable "Come!" from Williams's lips, however, roused him, and paying the fees, he led his bride to the church door. A chaise was there in waiting, packed with all the little articles which had been accumulated at the gardener's cottage, and the man Brown was standing by its side. Lucy got in, her husband followed, the door was closed, and the post-boy, according to his previous orders, drove off at a rapid rate towards the nearest seaport. Poor Lucy had not seen her lover since the Saturday before. She had received a hurried note from him that morning, dated at the time, telling her to pack up everything, and have all prepared, and he would join her at the church. The words were somewhat wild, and the hand-writing shaken and

irregular, but yet the note had made Lucy very happy. When she saw him in the church, however, his pale and haggard look, his wild and abstracted manner alarmed her much; but still he had kept his promise; he had made her his wife; he had even testified his strong affection for her in so doing; and as they drew out of the town she laid her hand on his, and said, "Thank you, Alfred, thank you!"

Alfred Latimer cast his arms round her, drew her vehemently to his bosom, and pressed his lips on hers.

But we must return to the church.

Williams and Brown and the good gardener walked away together. The latter seemed inclined to stay and gossip with them; but Williams thrust a couple of guineas into the man's hand, saying, "There, my good friend. The gentleman left that for you, in case there should be anything broken, or out of order in your lodging. Good day;" and without further ceremony, he turned in another direction, and hurried off.

The rector hastened home to his breakfast, after speaking a word or two to the clerk; and the clerk, walking up to the door of a pew, opened it, to give exit to Mr. Quatterly and Dr. Western.

"Well, my dear sir, that's all over," said the worthy solicitor; "and so you are now satisfied on that score. She's bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh; so that account being put in order, we have nothing to detain us here for more than an hour, I should think; and, with your good leave, we will order a chaise, and be off for Mallington."

"Most willingly," replied Dr. Western, "for I am most anxious to be back;" and thus saying, he issued out of the church porch, crossed the little burying-ground around it, and entered the street.

"Ha! who have we got here!" cried Mr. Quatterly, "our sagacious Dogberry posting away as if for life. Good morning, Mr. Higginthorp, good morning; what news stirring. Mr. Constable? Anything from our young friend in quod? 'Pon my life you had better let him out, or you'll get into a scrape."

"Let him out!" cried Mr. Higginthorp, tapping the side of his nose sagaciously with his forefinger. "No, no; whatsoever any one says I shall keep him safe. Why, sir, he's confessed quite voluntary to being a cessary before the fact to an inhuman robbery as was to be committed by the notorious Jack Williams this here last night as was at Mallington Hall."

"Jack Williams!" exclaimed Dr. Western; "why that's the very man who was here not a minute ago. He turned the corner with the other fellow just as we came out."

"Thems the men! thems the men!" said Mr. Higginthorp. "Which way did they go, your worship!"

"Towards the High-street, I think," said Dr. Western.

"Then I'll be after them like winkey," rejoined the constable. "You, gentlemen, toddle off to Mr. Muzzlewell's house, as soon as I've got 'em I'll bring 'em down. If I can but get a grab of that feller's collar I'm a made man;" and thus saying, he set off running with

a degree of activity which neither his bulk nor his peculiar conformation seemed at all to promise.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE morning shone bright over Mallington Park and Mallington village. The river glistered in the early sunshine, the trees waved their leaves, touched with autumnal yellow, in the light air, as if seeking for refreshment; a cloud or two, thin, small, and high up, drifted away overhead on the quick breeze. All was gay and peaceful; but the windows of the hall remained closed, the chimneys gave forth no smoke, and the great door, which usually was flung back soon after daybreak, showing the glass door within, stood firm as it had been fastened the night before. These were unusual things, yet, strange to say, they remained without notice till near eight o'clock. It had been the common custom of poor Edmonds, the park-keeper, since he had made a practice of sleeping at the hall, to go upon his round straight from the house before he returned to his wife and son; the gamekeepers and workmen who had been lately taken into employment went their several ways, sure to meet him or be visited by him in the course of the morning; and old Blackmore, the gardener, with the man who assisted him, proceeded at once to the garden, which lay at a little distance from the mansion.

Mrs. Edmonds, who had charge of the cows, usually milked them at an early hour of the morning, and sent up what was wanted at the hall by her son; but for more than a fortnight she had been later than before, for here was a heavy heart just then, and it is wonderful how slow a heavy heart will make the limbs. It was eight o'clock, then, when the boy, carrying a small can of milk and a basket of butter, walked leisurely up to the terrace and went round to the back door. He looked up to the windows, and marvelled to see them all shut; but his was not the period of fears and apprehensions, though he was a quick, clever, thoughtful boy, and he only said to himself, "The old folks have overslept themselves;" but when he found the back door fastened, his surprise became mingled with alarm, and, after trying another entrance on that side, he knocked hard with his hand, and rang the bell sharply, his heart beginning to beat with doubt and terror. Immediately there was a noise above, and looking up he saw the face of the housemaid at a window, pale, haggard, and wild. For a moment she did not seem disposed to open it, for fright had nearly deprived her of her senses; but when the boy moved a little way back so that she could see him fully, and shouted to her "What's the matter!—what's the matter!" she threw up the sash, exclaiming, "They have broken into the house, and locked us all in."

"Where's my father?" demanded the boy, in terror. "I can't get in; where's my father!"

"I don't know, I don't know," answered the housemaid. "I heard his gun go off; but I don't know any more."

At the same moment the old housekeeper, Mrs. Chalke, appeared at the window, and

what reassured by the sound of the boy's voice, for up to that moment they had not felt certain that the robbers were not still in the house. "Run and call somebody," she said, "run and call somebody, there's a good boy, and try and get in and let us out."

The boy pondered for an instant, for his first thought was to run home and tell his mother; but he was, as we have said, of a thoughtful and considerate mind; he was terrified himself for his father, and he immediately recollected that his news would alarm his other parent, before he had arrived at any certainty.

"I will go and call old Blackmore and Wilkins from the garden," he said, and setting down the milk and the basket with the butter, he ran off at full speed.

His news carried consternation and alarm to the gardeners. Each dropped the implement with which he was working, and gazed upon the boy as if utterly confounded; but old Blackmore recovered himself in a minute, and crying "Come along, Wilkins. Take a pickaxe, we'll soon get in. Run away, my dear, down to the lodge, and send up any of the people you can meet, especially the gamekeepers," he trudged off as fast as he could go, with a strong hoe in his hand, and was soon under the windows of the house. He found the task of breaking in, however, more difficult than he had anticipated. He first tried the back door, encouraged by the housekeeper and housemaid above, who continued to pour forth on him and his companion from the window the tale of the preceding night's terrible adventures—how their door had been burst open by men with their faces covered with crape; how they had been dragged from their beds, and locked up in the room where they then were; and how they had heard an awful smashing and breaking, and a gun fired below.

"Poor Edmonds!" said old Blackmore, shaking his head and working away with redoubled energy, "I doubt they've done him a mischief."

The door, however, resisted all his efforts; he tore a large splinter off the bottom with his pickaxe; but he was as far from his end as ever, when Mrs. Chalke called from above "Try one of the windows, John Blackmore, try one of the windows. You'll get in easier so."

The gardener was just about to follow her suggestion when two of the gamekeepers came running up, with young Edmonds following as fast as his lesser limbs would let him. Many were the questions asked and answered; but the old gardener worked away, and with their assistance soon effected an entrance by one of the windows. When they got into the room beyond, however, Mrs. Chalke's precautions acted to prevent them proceeding any further, for the door was locked, and they had to get out of the window again in order to commence operations in another quarter. It then struck him that the boy's account of all the doors being fast might not be quite accurate, and, some running one way and some another, all were tried, till at length one of the gamekeepers exclaimed "They must have got in some how. Perhaps the door in the stable yard is open. Here, hold any gun; I'll run and see."

He first tried the great gates, but they were shut,

and then following exactly the course which Williams and his companions had pursued, he got into the yard, and almost immediately after his voice was heard exclaiming "Here, here! This is the way," and the whole party scrambled over, and found him at the entrance of the passage, with the door wide open.

All was dark within, and a feeling of awe even mastered curiosity, for none knew what they might meet with next. They paused for an instant; but then the boy passed them all, crying "Oh, my father! I wonder what they have done to father."

"Come along," cried Blackmore; "open some of the windows as we go, Wilkins. One of you fellows run and let the women out."

But, notwithstanding this desire, there were busy feelings among them that kept them altogether. The silence, the darkness of the house, had something terrible in it; but still they went on, opening the windows as they passed, till they reached the hall, where Blackmore paused; but the boy, becoming more and more terrified in regard to his father every moment, exclaimed "This way, this way, Blackmore. He used to sleep in the room up here."

"Stay a minute, my dear," said the gardener, laying his hand upon young Edmonds's head. "Toin, you come on with me; better let the men go on first, my dear," and walking forward with sad misgivings in his heart, he opened the door of poor Edmonds's room. The passage was obscure, the windows were closed, and the interior was quite dark; but there was no sound, and the old gardener, advancing cautiously, opened the shutters. "My God!" cried one of the men who was behind him, and, turning quickly round, the old gardener saw the floor covered with blood, and the dead body of his good friend lying on the bed. The four men gathered round, and it was long before any one ventured to speak; but in the midst of the deep silence a loud and wailing cry burst from behind them, and Blackmore, turning, threw his arms round the poor boy, while the tears dropped heavily from his own eyes.

"Better go away, my dear, better go away," he said. "Here, Wilkins, take him down to my cottage. Don't let him go home just yet. I'll to your mother, and comfort her as well as I can. Go away, there's a good boy; this is no sight for you."

The boy was quite passive in their hands, and, taking him by the arm, Wilkins led him away, while the old gardener whispered "As soon as you have taken him to my wife, run over and fetch Dr. Western. You had better get the constable, too, and send word to the other magistrates."

"Shall I bring the doctor?" asked Wilkins, as he was going out of the door. But Blackmore took up poor Edmonds's hand, let it drop again stiff and cold upon the bed, and shook his head mournfully.

"You may as well, however," he said; "the poor widow may want him."

They then proceeded to examine the house, and to release the two women who were shut up above. The object and proceedings of the robbers, as far as any traces of them remained, were soon discovered, and the story of Mrs. Chalke and the housemaid told over and over

again. Edmonds's gun was found in the house-keeper's room; and as Mrs. Chalke and the housemaid both declared that the door leading into the yard had been locked when they went to bed the night before, it was clear that the lock had been picked, and entrance effected by that means. The whole party immediately applied themselves to look for footsteps, and, though they were somewhat puzzled by their own, which crossed the yard in a direct line, they found a number of others both going and coming.

"Here are three sizes clear enough," said Blackmore. "Take care, don't tread amongst them. This is a very big one, and here's one a little less, and then a small one, not much bigger than a woman's. Let us leave them till the magistrates come. I dare say we shall be able to trace them out in the park, for they must have crossed the road somewhere, and the gravel is soft."

Following his advice, they returned into the house, and endeavored to ascertain from the two women the appearance of the men they had seen; but, as usually happens in such cases, terror had very much troubled the vision of Mrs. Chalke and her companion; and though the description they gave somewhat resembled Brown, the picture they painted was anything but like Williams, to whom they gave at least three or four inches in height more than he could lay any claim to. They both agreed, however, that one was much taller than the other.

"There must have been three of them, at least, Mrs. Chalke," said Blackmore.

"We only saw two," answered the house-keeper.

"Ah, but I'm sure I saw a man's head at the end of the passage," exclaimed the housemaid.

"And I thought I heard people speaking below as they dragged me along," said Mrs. Chalke.

While this conversation was going on two or three people came hurrying up from Mallington, the news having been spread by Wilkins as he went down. No magistrates appeared, however; but at length the constable came, full of bustle and importance, in a case which he thought worthy of his genius. From him it was first learnt that Dr. Western was absent from Mallington, and that Mr. Middleton had been sent for; and in about half an hour after, that gentleman was seen galloping across the park at full speed. By this time the place was full of people, half the village having turned out as the news had been diffused from house to house, and from mouth to mouth; and it was with great difficulty that Blackmore and the constable could prevent them from running all over Mallington Hall before the magistrates arrived, for everybody was determined to see the body of poor Edmonds and the plate-room which had been broken into, and very much disappointed at even being delayed in gratifying their curiosity. Miss Mathilda Martin, who was amongst the first, had nearly forced her way over all impediments, and got into a serious dispute with Blackmore, when he stopped her, by gently insinuating in the heat of the moment that she dared say he had something to do with it himself, or he wouldn't try to prevent people

from seeing with their own eyes. As soon as Mr. Middleton appeared, she was the first to attack him, approaching with an air of great familiarity and consequence, and shaking her head ruefully.

"Ah, sir," she said, "I knew what would happen—I was quite sure of it. I told you so. When such people are suffered to be about a place there is sure to be some mischief. He was not always hanging about here for nothing. He might have murdered us all in our beds, the bloody-minded villain. It's not my fault; I gave all the information I possessed."

"There, get out of the way," cried Harry Soames roughly, "and let his worship come in and examine. You had better go home and measure out your ribands, Miss Martin. This is no place for women or gossiping either."

The fair Mathilda was exceeding wroth; but she knew that it would not do to quarrel with the constable, and therefore governed her anger. In the meanwhile Mr. Middleton, under the guidance of Harry Soames, proceeded, step by step, to examine into the whole affair, and then, without expressing any opinion, asked for pen and ink, saying, "We had better wait for Sir Simon Uppelstone; but, in the meantime, I will send a note."

The pen and ink were soon procured, and, sitting down at a table in the library, Mr. Middleton began to write the note he spoke of, while Harry Soames stood scratching his head before him, and looking wondrous wise. At first the magistrate did not remark him; or at least did not observe the peculiar expression of his countenance, for there was an immense gable in the adjacent rooms; but immediately after, raising his eyes in search of a thought, of which he himself had not many to spare, he suddenly perceived the constable, and the constable's look. Now, Mr. Middleton was a man who, though of a decided tone, was not naturally of a decided character, and though he often led others who were a step weaker, still he was always led himself when he came in contact with any one stronger in mind. With such sort of people there is nothing so embarrassing as a doubtful expression of countenance. I have seen a whole congregation of strong resolutions put to flight in a moment by a shake of the head and an elevation of the eye-brows, and a shrug of the shoulders has discomfited many a grave purpose. Oratory may be combated, arguments refuted; but a look of doubt and admonition slightly tinged with a little pity is so intangible, expresses so many things more than the eloquence of Cicero or Demosthenes could ever have found voice to utter, that it is perfectly irrefragable, and Mr. Middleton, laying down the pen, demanded, "What's the matter, Soames?" Now he had a great respect for Soames's opinion.

"Why, please your worship, I was thinking that you might be writing about Mr. Morton," replied the constable.

"Well, so I was, Soames," answered the magistrate, "What of that?"

"Why, sir, it's all nonsense," answered Harry Soames.

"You mean to say what I've written is nonsense?" demanded Mr. Middleton, a good deal nettled at the unceremonious epithet.

"Oh dear, no, your worship; I meant that story of *Matty Martin's*," said the constable in haste. "Since I saw your worship last I've been putting that and that together, and I'm quite sure it's all stuff. He's a gentleman, every inch of him, from all that I can hear."

"Why you told me quite the contrary t'other day," answered Mr. Middleton. "I don't understand your shifting about in this way, constable."

"Why, you see, sir," answered *Shames*, "that I am certainly not likely to be right when your worship is wrong; but then I've had an opportunity of getting information when you haven't. Now, I find from good Mrs. *Pluckrose* that the very gentleman who came down on Saturday night, and was in such a fuss when he found out that Mr. *Morton* had disappeared, and in such a fright about him too, is no other than that very Mr. *Quatterly*, the solicitor, from whom the notes were stolen. So it can't be Mr. *Morton* that stole them."

"I don't know that," said Mr. Middleton, sagely; "a thousand things might have happened; but, however it is, I am determined to give Mrs. *Charlton* full warning, and to desire her to detain this man till the business is investigated."

Harry Soames was somewhat surprised and a good deal displeased to find that the magistrate did not follow his lead so readily as usual; but, while Mr. Middleton finished his note, by putting that and that together, as he termed it, he arrived very nearly at that gentleman's real motives. "Ay," he thought, "I know he wanted to marry his son to the young heiress, and he thinks this gentleman in the way; so he would do anything to floor him. But it won't answer, it won't answer."

"Don't you think, your worship," he continued, just as the magistrate, having signed, was sealing the note, "don't you think, sir, that while you are pursuing this game the real sort may get off. Now, I happen to know that *Jack Williams* was over here yesterday, and I saw *Bill Malthy* hanging about in the lanes down by the river as late as twelve o'clock at night."

"Why did you not execute your warrant against *Williams* then?" demanded the magistrate.

"Because I couldn't catch him," answered the constable; "I was out after him when I saw *Malthy*."

"Then *Malthy* must be taken into custody," said Mr. Middleton, abruptly; and at the same moment *Sir Simon Upplestone*, bouted and spurred, strode into the library.

"There," said Mr. Middleton, handing the note to *Soames*, "let that be sent to Mrs. *Charlton* as fast as it can go, and you yourself see if you can get hold of *Malthy*, and let him be brought here on suspicion."

Harry Soames took the note with the intention of delivering it himself, thinking as he did so, "If I'm right about this here affair it may be as well to be civil to Mr. *Morton*," and away he went in consequence; but it may be as well to remark that by this time it was past ten o'clock, and the distance between the hall and *Mallington House* was not far short of two miles.

CHAPTER LXXI.

WITHOUT pursuing the course of Mr. *Soames*, the constable, which, to say the truth, was somewhat circuitous—for he thought fit to secure the person of Mr. *William Malthy*, in the first instance, before he delivered the note at Mrs. *Charlton's*—we must proceed to *Mallington House*, and see what its inmates were about from an earlier hour in the morning than that at which our part of our tale has already arrived. Mrs. *Charlton* rose somewhat earlier than usual, and this morning she was in a much more placable mood—at least, to all appearance—with everybody and everything. She was as civil as possible to Mrs. *Windsor* herself, who waited upon her, to speak about household affairs, while she was dressing; and the shrewd house-keeper said to herself, "Now she's going to execute her grand scheme, if Mr. *Morton* comes back, and that I don't doubt he will do before the day's over, from all I see and hear. I wish I could get speech of him for five minutes before he sees her. If not, I must talk to Miss *Louisa*, and let her know all about it; otherwise, she'll take them both in, for she's as cunning as the black gentleman."

All this was passing in Mrs. *Windsor's* mind while she was listening with profound respect to directions about custards and jellies and sundry sorts of preserves; and, having got her orders, she retired with a low courtesy, while Mrs. *Charlton* thought to herself, in reference to Mrs. *Windsor*, "She's as smooth as a piece of marble. As soon as this is all settled, I'll pay her her wages, and send her packing."

Shortly after, Mrs. *Charlton* proceeded to the drawing-room, where she found *Louisa* already up, but looking somewhat pale and sad. "Come, *Louisa*, my love," said the excellent lady, "do not be melancholy and anxious; I'm sure Mr. *Morton* is quite safe. Indeed, I had an intuition last night that such is the case from good Mr. *Nethersole*, who heard it at Dr. *Western's* from Mrs. *Evelyn*—nay, there's no use of coloring, you naughty girl. You did not suppose my eyes were blind all this time, did you?"

Had there been esteem, respect, or affection, *Louisa* would have cast herself upon Mrs. *Charlton's* breast, and given way to grateful tears; but as there was neither, she repressed them, and the good lady proceeded: "One thing I may well say,—that I never saw a more charming man, nor one whom I should more like, as far as I see at present, for a son-in-law. I am not one to care for high birth, or great expectations, any more than yourself, my dear."

"Ma'am, the housemaid wants to speak to you," said a footman at the door; and Mrs. *Charlton*, wondering what a housemaid could wish to say to her, quitted the room.

After considering for a few minutes, not without both doubt and wonder, at her stepmother's conduct on the present occasion, *Louisa* took up a book to divert her thoughts from matters of unprofitable speculation, and a minute or two after the great bell of the door rang. A step was then heard upon the stairs which made *Louisa's* heart palpitate, and her color come and go. The next moment Mrs. *Charlton's* voice was heard welcoming somebody, and in another that lady and Mr. *Morton* entered the

room together. Mrs. Charlton's face was all radiant with the brightest and best-arrayed smiles possible; and Morton, advancing towards Louisa at once, with very little restraint of the feelings of his heart, took her hand in his, and pressed his lips upon it.

"Come, no explanations now," said Mrs. Charlton, "we'll have breakfast first, for I am very hungry;" and then, Louisa, myself, and our young friend will have a conference upon matters of importance. After that we will do anything you like."

With an easy grace, which bespoke the utmost composure, Mrs. Charlton led the way to the breakfast-room, leaving a sufficient space between herself on the one part, and Mr. Morton and Louisa on the other, to afford the lovers a few moments of private conversation as they descended the stairs. The whole evolution was performed very neatly, Mrs. Charlton speaking near the door, and then immediately taking her departure, so that it was impossible for Morton to be civil enough to attend at her side. Not the most discreet chaperon could have done it better. When, however, tea was made and coffee brought in, and all the principals and accessories of an English breakfast at the bar, the conversation of course became general, and naturally turned to the causes of the visitor's unexplained absence.

It was a somewhat difficult subject to deal with; but Morton had considered his position, and he generalized as much as possible, stating indeed the facts of his strange abduction, but withholding the names of the parties concerned in it. Mrs. Charlton, however, was not to be so satisfied, and whether it was any particular spirit of inquiry, or only the general devil of curiosity which is supposed to afflict ladies without much to do, I cannot tell; but she inquired at once, first, whether Mr. Morton knew the persons implicated in so gross an outrage; and, next, what were their names.

"My dear madam," replied her guest, "my worthy solicitor, who was the first to come to my rescue, advises a prosecution, and says that some of the parties might be transported; but as I am very much disinclined to such harsh measures, and very much inclined to let the matter pass, I think it will be better perhaps not to mention any names till, after due deliberation, I have made up my mind to my course."

Mrs. Charlton merely replied, "Oh! very well," and breakfast proceeded to its close without any farther interrogatory.

When that important avocation was at an end, a slight and only momentary tremor seemed to come over the lady of the house; but immediately after she rose, saying in a clear sweet voice, "Now, my dear sir, I wish to speak with you for a few minutes; and, if you please, we will go into the library."

Mr. Morton, of course, acceded; Louisa remained where she was, with a somewhat uneasy heart, and Mrs. Charlton and her visitor proceeded through the doors on the left and were soon seated in two arm-chairs on the opposite side of the fireplace. A short pause ensued, but Morton, perversely, would not break silence first, and at length Mrs. Charlton commenced with a gay, short, merry laugh.

"Well, Mr. Morton," she said, "this is, per-

haps, almost ridiculous to speak about; but yet I feel myself called upon to say something about our dear Louisa. You must feel that this cannot go on farther without some definite understanding between us upon the subject. Not, indeed, that I at all imagine you to be a man to trifle with any woman's affections; but people will make observations, and it is right that I should have something to answer to inquiries. In a word, then, you love Louisa—is it not so?"

"Most sincerely and devotedly, my dear madam," replied Morton. "I say at once I seek her hand, and am ready immediately to enter into explanations with both her guardians upon the subject."

This was not quite the reply that Mrs. Charlton either expected or desired. She had expected to hear of difficulties, to receive some excuses as to inferior fortune, and apologies for presuming to address a young lady of considerable wealth without equal advantages. She had thought it would be so; several things that she had seen, as well as the report of others, had made her imagine it; but yet her confidence in that result had been somewhat shaken by other circumstances. Nevertheless, she had a reserve, which she fancied quite secure. If Morton was not seeking Louisa for her wealth, he was evidently deeply attached to her—if it were love, it was love of a very intense and powerful kind; and she argued, if it be her money that is his object, she has enough to make a part a bait sufficiently tempting; if it be herself, the loss of a portion will be nothing in his estimation.

After a moment's pause, then, she answered, "Nay, my dear sir, I too must claim some say in the matter. In the first place as a mother—and I am sure I regard Louisa with the affection of one—and, in the next place, as one especially appointed by her dear father, the best and kindest man that ever lived"—and Mrs. Charlton took out a fine cambric handkerchief, embroidered in the corners—"appointed by her father. I say, to watch over her settlement in life. Perhaps you are not aware, Mr. Morton, that, by her father's will, my consent is absolutely necessary to her marriage, and therefore I am her guardian as far as that great step in a woman's life is concerned—nay, pray hear me—I mean not to say that I in the least object in the present case, far from it, I am strongly inclined to give my full approbation. All I mean is that the explanations must be to me, not to those who are merely her guardians and trustees till she is of age."

"My dear madam," replied Morton, "I have been fully made aware of the terms of Mr. Charlton's will."

"Good!" thought Mrs. Charlton, "he has inquired into the matter. It is her fortune he seeks, and he is prepared to act like a man of sense."

But Mr. Morton proceeded, "I am quite ready to give every explanation to either yourself if you think fit, or to the actual guardians; but first—"

"Oh yes!" said Mrs. Charlton, interrupting him, "it may first be necessary, as you say, to explain all the circumstances of the case; for, of course, they do not exactly appear upon the

face of the will; and, indeed, I have always felt that, in consequence of Mr. Charlton not stating his intentions clearly in that document, I am placed in a very delicate and unpleasant position. I wish to Heaven that he had acted with his usual habits of business; and I have always looked forward to this moment with apprehension and anxiety. It luckily happens now, however, that I have to deal with a man of high feeling and honor, who will understand my situation at once, and thus the task will be less difficult. It had better be undertaken at once, therefore; and thus the case stands:—Mr. Charlton and I had often talked over dear Louisa's prospects; and though he was at one time somewhat inclined—out of regard for me, I believe—that a marriage should take place between her and my son Alfred, I represented to him that the poor boy was in no degree fitted to make her happy, and induced him to put such a bar against it that it could never be thought of. He then, as you know, made his will, leaving all his property to Louisa, with my full consent and approbation; but, at the same time, he said to me, 'My dearest Emily, while Louisa remains with you, united as you are by the strongest ties of affection, there will be quite enough to maintain your household in the style in which you are accustomed to live; but it is my intention to render your consent to her marriage indispensable, both for her own sake and yours, in order that if she chooses to marry, which, perhaps, may not be the case, you may be secured such a share in what I leave as will compensate to you for her seeking another home.'—"

Mrs. Charlton paused, and looked at Mr. Morton; but that gentleman sat with his fine eyes bent upon the ground, without any movement of lip, nostril, or eye-brow indicating what was passing in his mind; and she then went on in an easy, natural tone, saying, "I argued against this arrangement; but he still adhered to it, though he was somewhat shaken before he died, but that lamentable event was so sudden that he had not time to make the better arrangements which I believe he proposed, and, therefore, of course, we must abide by those that exist."

"Certainly, my dear madam," replied Morton, "and may I now ask what it is that you think those arrangements imply?"

Now was the tug of war. It was the most important event of all those campaigns which Mrs. Charlton had carried on against the poverty in which she was originally born. She had hitherto been a very successful general, but this was her Waterloo, and she felt all the weight of the occasion. Nevertheless she would not by the pause of one moment suffer Mr. Morton to see that she was calculating. It was her wish to impress him with the idea that all had been settled long before between her and Mr. Charlton, and she replied in an instant, "My dear husband's wish was that if Louisa married, such an arrangement should be made as to secure to me one half of the property, for which reason he placed the whole at my disposal if she married without my consent."

Morton had well nigh laughed. The murder was out, the whole scheme developed; but he restrained himself, and demanded, "Pray, my

dear madam, is there any memorandum of this intention of Mr. Charlton, any document by which the matter may be defined?"

"No, sir, no!" answered the lady, beginning to grow angry at his coolness, and her cheek becoming somewhat flushed with a vague perception that he saw through her; "there is no memorandum—there is no document. But, surely, Mr. Morton," she added, in a less sharp tone, "you can trust to my word."

"Oh! undoubtedly," replied Morton; "but it would be much more satisfactory to me, my dear lady, to have something tangible to satisfy certain principles which I have within the last three days announced so distinctly that I fear I could not retreat from them without such written proofs of Mr. Charlton's intentions."

The lady was in a state of high consternation and anger. She had expected no such opposition; but what could she do? Her own case was urgent; money she must have; she had always calculated upon having it; and even delay would be ruinous. In these circumstances she lost her usual caution, exposing her game more and more. "Such as I have stated were Mr. Charlton's intentions," she replied; "but I do not say, Mr. Morton, that I am by any means disposed to exact the complete fulfillment of his wishes. A third of the property, fairly estimated, is all that I expect; but that I think I have a right to demand."

"My dear madam," replied Morton, in the same quiet tone, "according to your own showing, you have a right to demand half; and all I require is, that the fact of Mr. Charlton's intentions should be so clearly shown as to justify me in acceding, having, as I said, within those three days distinctly expressed an opinion of the subject, which I cannot retract."

"Within these three days!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, her cheek growing very red; "to whom, sir—who has a right to meddle with these matters but myself?"

"To your own son, my dear madam," answered her companion. "It is now necessary to inform you that Mr. Alfred Latimer, with gang of not very respectable gentlemen what he employed, was the person to carry me from Mallington, and that his object was to drive a bargain with me to pay him certain thousand pounds on my marriage with Miss Charlton. He also hinted that you would have something of this kind to propose; but I told him distinctly, and at once, that I would never make a matter of merchandise of Miss Charlton's hand, nor be any party to any such transaction; that I would wed her with all that her father left her, or with none, and therefore—"

"Then, then!"—cried Mrs. Charlton, fury flashing from her eyes—but before could finish the sentence, Wilkinson, the man, entered the room with a note up salver, saying, "Soames, the constable, b this, ma'am, and he is waiting to see you."

Mrs. Charlton took the note, and was turning it round her fingers; but the man at "He says it's very immediate, ma'am, and important."

His mistress tore it open, and read. A first words a malicious and triumphant crossed her angry countenance, and at the she rose and hurried out of the room; w

Morton, supposing their conference ended, passed through the side door into the breakfast-room in search of Louisa.

CHAPTER LXXII.

"CAN you tell me where I shall find Miss Charlton?" demanded Morton, as he entered the dining-room, and saw Mrs. Windsor's head looking in at the opposite door.

"She is in the little drawing-room, sir," answered the housekeeper; "but I was looking for you, sir—I beg pardon for the liberty. I have something very particular to say to you, if you would be good enough to allow me five minutes' conversation."

"Very willingly, Mrs. Windsor," answered Morton, moving towards the door, "and I shall be happy to do anything I can for you, but I fear, if you desire any conversation with me, you must come down to the inn, as, in consequence of something that has just passed, I do not propose to trespass upon Mrs. Charlton's hospitality any longer. At present I must speak with Miss Charlton, immediately."

"I guess what has passed, sir," answered Mrs. Windsor, with a grave face, "and wish I could have spoken to you before, as it was just about that I desired to say a word or two, for Mrs. Charlton has in reality no more power over Miss Louisa, or her fortune either, than I have; and I do not like to see my poor young lady made unhappy. But by and by will do, if, as I suppose, you have refused her terms."

While she had been speaking she had accompanied Mr. Morton to the foot of the great stairs, as if to show him the way, though he knew it quite well; but here he turned to gaze at her face, with a good deal of surprise in his own to find her apparently so well acquainted with the nature of Mrs. Charlton's conversation with himself. He had heard a good deal of the various uses of keyholes and crannies, but in the present instance it was evident that Mrs. Windsor had not employed such channels of information, or she would have known his answer, as well as Mrs. Charlton's demand, and consequently he was puzzled. But that was not a moment to find out a puzzle, and therefore merely saying, "I have," he began ascending the stairs.

"Pray hold firm, sir," continued Mrs. Windsor, "for she has no power at all, as I will show you, whenever you have a moment's leisure;" and thus saying, she dropped a low and respectful courtesy and retired.

Morton, on his part, hurried on, and at once entered the little drawing-room, where he found his fair Louisa gazing out of the window, with the vacant look of deep and anxious thought, for she was well aware that what was taking place below while she was left alone, was matter deeply affecting her own peace. She sprang to meet him, however, as soon as she saw him, and we must forgive Morton if he took one embrace, ay, and one kiss.

"Listen, dearest," he said, "for we may be interrupted in a moment—I shall have to leave this house very soon. She wishes to make a matter of merchandise of your hand. I will consent to no such thing. It shall never be said

I bought my Louisa. She has, she says, and so says your poor father's will, the power of depriving you of all he left if you marry without her consent, and for that consent she demands half your property. So be it—Louisa is to me a treasure which makes all other wealth valueless. I can settle upon you enough to compensate for what you lose. Will you, dear one, will you make this sacrifice for me; and be mine even at the risk of losing all that is now your own!"

"Oh, Morton!" cried Louisa sadly, "it is you that will lose what you had a right to expect."

"I win all that I desire if I win you, Louisa," answered Morton. "Do you consent?—Will you be mine at any risk?"

"At any, at every risk I will," replied Louisa earnestly, "and try to compensate by my love and gratitude for such noble conduct. But what must I do, Morton, if—"

"Go down as soon as possible to Dr. Western's," answered Morton, before she could finish her question. "Take up your abode with him and Mrs. Evelyn till you can be mine. He is your guardian, and his house is your proper place of refuge, dearest—some one is coming. Will you promise me to do so?"

"I will, Edmund," she said, "I will; nothing shall stop me, for I feel that after all this, the house where I have spent so many happy and so many unhappy hours would almost be unendurable."

Almost as she spoke, Mrs. Charlton entered the room; but the expression of that lady's countenance was so peculiar that it deserves a word or two for itself. There was still a touch of anger about it, but subdued and quieted, while a slight smile mingled an air of triumph with the bitterness of the expression, as if she had suddenly gained some advantage over an enemy. Her brow was slightly contracted, her lips close and drawn into good order, a very tolerable glow in her cheeks, and an expansion about the nostril, as if she struggled to keep down her emotions, whatever they were. Her tone, too, when she spoke, was cold and decided, though with an affectation of perfect ease, which showed the effort a little too plainly.

"So," she said, somewhat sarcastically, "you are consulting about it. Have you made up your minds yet?"

"You are mistaken, my dear madam," answered Morton; "we are not consulting upon it at all, and as to my mind, it is perfectly made up."

"Well, I have been thinking of other things," said Mrs. Charlton, "and we can talk of that afterwards, should it be necessary. Pray, be seated, Mr. Morton. You have heard, I suppose, of what has happened in our neighborhood!"

"No, indeed," answered her guest, "I have heard of nothing extraordinary, except what has happened to myself within this last two or three days."

The words would bear two interpretations, but Mrs. Charlton was in that irritable frame of mind in which persons always choose the worst and most offensive meaning that can be attached to anything that is said to them, and consequently she immediately contrived to think that Morton referred to her own conduct towards

"I wish I could venture to call you a good old one," answered Morton; "but, at all events, let me call to your remembrance that a person should always be looked upon as innocent till he is proved guilty, and that it is sometimes inconvenient to forget that you are a gentleman or that another is so, as you may have occasion afterwards to repent it."

"What, sir! do you venture to threaten me, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Middleton, in fury; "to threaten a magistrate in the execution of his duty!"

"Oh dear, no!" replied Morton, calmly; "I do not threaten you at all, Mr. Middleton. I only wish to call you back to a sense of propriety. I beg leave to say, sir, that I am not your good young man; for I am either your very bad young man indeed, or not your young man at all."

"This is foolish nonsense," replied the worthy gentleman; "but we shall soon have Sir Simon Upplestone here, and we can proceed to business on the spot. If you will have the kindness to let us use one of your drawing-rooms, Mrs. Charlton, I do not see why we should adjourn at all. Or we can go to the library, which, perhaps, will be more out of your way."

"Oh dear, no!" answered Mrs. Charlton; "let it be here, by all means. There stands a young lady who declares she will be present the whole time; and I rather imagine that I shall be forced to submit to examination as a witness."

Mr. Middleton raised his eyebrows at the announcement of Louisa's intention, and looked surprised at Mrs. Charlton's hint of her own testimony being important; but after a few moments' private conversation with that lady, he seemed still more surprised, and turning round, exclaimed aloud, "Is it possible! The whole seems so clear that we might, I think, commit him for trial at once—but here is Sir Simon, I suppose. Who has he got with him, I wonder!"

The last observations of worthy Mr. Middleton were produced by the sound of steps and voices coming up the stairs; but he was surprised, when the door opened, to see not only his friend Sir Simon Upplestone, but Dr. Western and another gentleman, with two or three persons of an inferior class, standing at the top of the staircase. The first who entered was the baronet, and without noticing Mrs. Charlton, or any one else in the room, he advanced straight towards his brother magistrate, and then said in a loud whisper, "I am afraid there has been a great mistake here, Middleton. You have been in too great a hurry."

"Not a bit, Sir Simon, not a bit," replied Mr. Middleton, in a determined tone. "You are not acquainted with all the circumstances, my good friend."

"Nor you either, Middleton," answered the other. "The prisoner is in custody, and the case must be investigated immediately."

While he was speaking Dr. Western walked slowly into the room, with a grave brow, and an expression both of pain and indignation on his countenance, and advancing at once to Morton, by whose side Louisa was still standing, he shook hands with them both, and then turning

towards the other magistrates, demanded aloud, "What is all this folly, Mr. Middleton!"

"Hush, hush," said Morton, in a low tone. "Let the whole thing proceed, my dear friend. I wish particularly to see that worthy lady play her game out."

"She does not know what she is doing," said Louisa sadly. "She does not know what she is doing."

In the meantime Mr. Middleton was answering Dr. Western's question in an authoritative and a somewhat sarcastic tone; saying, "The folly, my reverend friend, happens to be no folly at all. A strong—an exceedingly strong case of suspicion has been made out against that gentleman standing there as accessory, if not principal, in the robbery of Mallington Hall, and the murder of poor Edmonds, the late earl's park-keeper; and since I have come here this morning, additional evidence has been tendered which must, I think, place his guilt beyond all manner of doubt, and require his immediate committal to the county jail. I am glad of the assistance of my two brother justices, but if they had not been present I should have taken the responsibility upon myself."

A clear merry laugh rang through the room, and a good round voice exclaimed, "Ay! if life and ends were pots and pans, there would be no work for the tinkers. How do you do, my dear sir!—how do you do! You seem to have had a pleasant time of it since we parted yesterday evening; but it's a long lane that has never a turning, and when the cat's away the mice will play. As it seems clear we are to have larks for supper, I may as well get rid of my knife and fork;" and Mr. Quatterly, after having shaken hands with Morton, and given a gay sparkling glance from his face to that of Louisa Charlton, murmuring to himself, "Devilish pretty! devilish pretty!" pulled out of his pocket a note book, a pencil, and some papers, folded up and tied together with red tape.

At the same time Dr. Western was advancing to speak with the other magistrates and Mrs. Charlton, who were gathered together in a group on the opposite side of the room; but Morton at this moment took a step forward, and said aloud, "My dear Dr. Western, you must hear me for a moment. This business cannot and must not be stopped: a very serious and horrible charge, perfectly unfounded, as you well know, has been brought against me this morning, together with half-a-dozen other minor insinuations, partly proceeding from malice, and partly from stupidity, originating. I have no doubt, amongst the gossips of this little town, and fostered under the kind care of that lady and that gentleman," and he pointed to Mrs. Charlton and Mr. Middleton. "These charges and insinuations must at once be thoroughly and accurately investigated. Upon this I insist, and I have to beg you, my dear sir, and also my friend here on the left, not to bring forward any one particular to prove to the persons concerned the absurdity of the accusation, till all the charges themselves are fairly stated, and the evidence upon which they are grounded adduced. I would rather, if it were necessary, sleep a night in prison than that the whole of the business should not be made quite clear, and the conduct of those who take part in it be fully exposed."

Morton's coolness, and the determined tone in which he spoke—the whole conduct of Dr. Western towards him—the presence and the merriment of Mr. Quatterly, who, though his name had not yet been announced, was evidently no ordinary man—all struck and somewhat confounded both Mrs. Charlton and Mr. Middleton. The former somewhat regretting, perhaps, that she had gone so far, but with not a particle less venom in her heart than she had felt before, was only anxious to show a fair face to the world, and to prove that she was moved by none but the best of feelings, even whilst she pursued her own objects most virulently; and consequently in the sweetest possible tone she said, "The gentleman does me great injustice in supposing that I have fostered any slanders against him. I am sure Mr. Morton has no occasion to say that I have treated him with anything but unvarying kindness and hospitality ever since he first came into Mallington—too much so, indeed, I fear, from all that now appears, and from the undutiful conduct of that young lady, who seems to entertain the idea that any treatment of a step-mother is justifiable and right."

Mr. Middleton, who had heard Mrs. Charlton even with impatience, did not suffer Morton to reply; but, anxious to get a little farther insight into the business before he went on, he said aloud, although in a somewhat less pompous tone than before, "The case, the young gentleman says, must have full investigation. It is quite right that it should; but what he himself suggested, I think, would be the right course—namely, to remand him till to-morrow morning, at eleven, when the whole evidence can be gone into, and the case fully examined."

"Against that I most decidedly protest," said Dr. Western. "Mr. Morton proposed no such thing. He merely said that he would rather submit to a night's imprisonment than that the matter should not be made clear; but I will not consent to any such course, when it can be made clear in five minutes."

"But, my dear sir, you are not the only magistrate present," said Mr. Middleton; "and if the majority vote for remanding the prisoner, I think it must be done—what do you say, Sir Simon?"

But Sir Simon was already tired of the business, filled with many doubts as to whether they had not all got into a scrape, and rather anxious to see the unraveling of the clue. He, therefore, answered bluffly, "why, you know, Middleton, the fox-hounds meet at Burnley to-morrow, and that's twelve miles off, so I shall vote for going on to-day to a certainty."

"A cogent and irrefutable argument!" exclaimed Mr. Quatterly, rubbing his small fat white hands with great internal satisfaction at the various considerations of country justice. "Sir, I congratulate you upon such a high and equitable view of the case; but will you allow me to remind you all that the proceedings of the worshipful body here present, have hitherto been somewhat irregular, more resembling those of a corporation committee, or of a meeting of the various partners in a bankrupt bank, than of a body of gentlemen exercising high magisterial functions. Here are accused and witnesses, and magistrates and constables, and

gentlemen and ladies—*quot tot et omnes*—all mixed up together in the same drawing-room, in a very indiscriminate manner, while some nine or ten other young ladies, who, I am told, are also witnesses, are assembled at the door, enjoying the benefit of our desultory conversation. Now, if this room is to be converted into a justice-room, and it is not your pleasure to adjourn to a more fitting place—"

"I think that would be much the best plan," said Mr. Middleton.

But Mrs. Charlton, who liked to fight her battle upon her own ground, strongly objected; and both Dr. Western and Sir Simon Upstone, each for their own several reasons, were also opposed to such a step.

"Well, then," continued Mr. Quatterly, whose peculiarities gained for him considerable attention, though as yet no one but Morton and Dr. Western knew who he was—"Well, then, since it is to be a justice-room, you had better draw that sofa-table across the other side. Each justice can have an arm-chair, and then there will be one left for the clerk, who, by the way, had better be sent for. There are but two footstools, but, I dare say, another can be brought from another room; the witnesses had better be removed till they are needed; and if there is another drawing-room, as I take it, on that side, they can come in by those folding doors. Thus the whole proceeding can be conducted in the most delicate and lady-like manner possible, and whatever it may be in reality, it will have the appearance of justice, at least."

Mr. Middleton was not so obtuse as to be blind to the fact that Mr. Quatterly was quietly laughing at them all; and he asked, in an angry tone, "And pray, sir, who are you, who come here, quite a stranger, to set us all to rights or to wrongs, as the case may be?"

"A very humble individual, your worship," replied Mr. Quatterly, with a low bow, and a quiet smile; "but, I believe, an honest man, though I have had everything in the way of temptation against me, being a magistrate, a lawyer, and, moreover—sad to say—the managing governor of several charities. I was called to the bar, good luck! now more than forty years ago; but finding briefs few, and money likely to be scanty in that branch of the profession, for the pure lucre of gain—like Tommy Tucker, who turned a Turk for twopence—I stripped off my gown, and became an attorney. Thus, sir, I have the honor of presenting myself to your worship as Timothy Quatterly, attorney-at-law, by some persons termed Esquire, and a J. P. for the county of Herts. That, present by your permission, I appear to watch these proceedings on the part of my client here."

Mr. Middleton and Mrs. Charlton were both somewhat disconcerted in mind. One step had been taken to knock their foundation from below them. Mr. Morton was not Mr. Wilkins—that was evident. He was a man of some consequence, too, apparently, for he kept an attorney; and, as a consequence, he was more likely to be fool than knave. Mrs. Charlton asked for a glass of cold water, and spoke a few words to Mr. Middleton, to which Mr. Middleton replied in as low a tone as her own, "Why, after all, you know, my dear madam, many rich men

commit great crimes, and we have instances of peers themselves being hanged for murder."

"True, true," said Mrs. Charlton, in a whisper; "and the proofs I can bring forward would convict any man."

"I may be permitted to observe," said Mr. Quatterly, in a dry tone, "that it is not usual for magistrates to whisper with witnesses, in which capacity I understand that lady is about to appear."

"Nor for witnesses to whisper with prisoners," said Mr. Middleton, pointing towards Louisa and Morton, who still stood side by side, and were speaking together somewhat eagerly, notwithstanding the injunction to prevent such communication which the magistrate had laid upon the constable.

"Is that lady about to be a witness?" demanded Mr. Quatterly; "I wasn't aware of the fact."

"I am afraid it will be absolutely necessary, sir," replied Louisa, "though I could much wish to avoid it."

"For or against the prisoner, madam?" demanded the solicitor.

"Oh, for him to be sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton; "there can be no doubt of that!"

"Then all the witnesses had better retire, or all the witnesses had better be admitted," said Mr. Quatterly. "We can't make meal of one and malt of the other, you know, gentlemen."

"We have sent for our clerk, sir," said Sir Simon Uppestone; "and we shall act by his opinion."

"A capital thing to get a man who has an opinion," said Mr. Quatterly, rubbing his hands again. "I didn't know there were any in the county—except our friend Mr. Higginthorp," he continued, turning towards Morton, and then looking to Dr. Western. "He, indeed, has an opinion, and a very decided one."

The moment after, Mr. Skinner appeared, and looked round the room with some surprise and amazement. His affections seemed to be rather divided, and his mind bewildered by the variety of persons he saw, and the variety of positions in which they had placed themselves. His eyes fell first, however, upon the group consisting of Louisa, Mr. Morton, and the constable, with Mr. Quatterly a step before them, as an outpost in advance of their camp; and, taking a step forward in that direction, he bowed low to the young lady, and still more low and reverently to the young gentleman. Mr. Quatterly, however, shook hands with him, saying, "Ah, Skinner! how do you do! These gentlemen are in a mess, I think," and then, as he saw his fellow solicitor raise his eyes to the group on the opposite side of the room, where Sir Simon Uppestone, Mrs. Charlton, and Mr. Middleton stood together, with Dr. Western a little thrown out from the main body, he added, "There, Skinner, go across Tom Tickler's ground, and tell their worship what they're to do, for they don't know."

Mr. Skinner accordingly crossed over; and, after a brief consultation with the magistrates, decided that it was better all the witnesses should be admitted. It was their usual custom in that part of the county, he said, as it was merely a preparatory investigation, and truth might be generally better obtained by giving

general publicity in this stage of the proceedings. Mr. Quatterly did not object, though he shook his head as if he had some doubts of the soundness of the doctrine; and the door having been opened, a mixed multitude entered, consisting of game-keepers, gardeners, housekeepers, housemaids, Mr. Gibbs, and Miss Mathilda Maria. Mrs. Charlton, however, was somewhat surprised to see her friend Mrs. Windsor come in with the rest, and also Mrs. Windsor's still-room maid, a pretty little girl of about seventeen or eighteen, who, under the peculiar protection of the housekeeper, slept in a little bed-closet off her own room.

"What do you want here, Windsor!" said Mrs. Charlton, in a sharp key.

"To give my evidence, ma'am," said Mrs. Windsor, respectfully.

"Your evidence!" exclaimed her mistress.

"You can know nothing about it."

"I think I do, ma'am," rejoined the housekeeper, dryly.

In the meantime the chairs and tables were arranged, under the direction of Mr. Skinner, very much in the way that Mr. Quatterly had proposed. The magistrate's clerk, however, contented himself with an ordinary chair, and, greatly to Mrs. Charlton's surprise and disgust, placed the fourth arm-chair for Mr. Morton with his own hands close to the table, and opposite to the one which he himself was about to occupy, while the magistrates were arranged on the other side. Pens, ink, and paper, having been procured, the clerk seated, and Dr. Western, as the senior magistrate, placed in the chair—the witnesses arranged, some seated, some standing, towards the sides of the room—the investigation commenced with some degree of regularity. But as this investigation is a great and momentous affair, much too important to our tale to be treated of at the far end of a chapter, we shall ask the reader's kind permission to reserve it for another, which shall be devoted entirely to itself.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

DR. WESTERN looked around the circle; and then, with a glance at Mr. Quatterly, though his heart was very sad—for he was one of those true Christians who mourn over the crimes of their fellow-creatures—he could not forbear a faint smile at what he regarded as one of the most absurd farces he had ever seen played. Mr. Quatterly caught his eye and laughed merrily, rubbing his small fat white hands as if it were the best joke in the world; for he was more accustomed to such scenes, and had so long given up the hope of mending human beings that he thought he had a right to be amused at their follies, whether solemn or gay.

"Let them go on! Let them go on," said the worthy solicitor, with a nod to the clergyman; "even in a farce truths will come out unexpectedly."

Neither of them knew what serious truths were likely to come out; but Mr. Middleton and especially Mrs. Charlton were both nettled at Dr. Western's smile and Mr. Quatterly's laugh—surprised, indeed, and somewhat apprehensive that they were not quite right, but more

angry than either, and resolved to go on in this course only the more vehemently, in order to prove that they had good cause for suspicions, however unjust those suspicions might prove in the end. Mrs. Charlton, it is true, was actuated by very different feelings from the worthy justice; for as she found that she could not gain her original purpose with Mr. Morton, she was resolved to have revenge; and being, as we have shown, subject to much more severe internal comminations than her calm and sweet exterior usually suffered to appear, she would have given one of her own pretty white hands to have seen her lately-cherished guest hanging by the neck from any piece of timber that was convenient. As she had no power, however, to act, it was Mr. Middleton who began.

"I think I had better read," said the worthy magistrate, "the notes I have taken of the state of Mallington Hall and the adjacent premises when I examined them this morning, on receiving information of the crime that was committed there last night."

"By all means," answered Dr. Western; "I am as yet nearly ignorant of the whole circumstances."

"That is clear," said Mr. Middleton, with a somewhat sarcastic smile; and he then proceeded to read from a little note-book the memoranda which he had taken on the spot, commenting, as it went, with that sort of routine of common-places, which is a wonderful engine for obtaining a reputation for sagacity—with the vulgar. Dr. Western listened with horror and grief, covering his eyes with his hands, as if unwilling that all he felt should appear; and the whole court, if it could be so called, heard the facts in deep silence, the recital being well calculated to awaken deep and painful feelings even in the low and callous.

After detailing the appearance of the rooms below and above, and giving an account of the position of the body of poor Edmonds, and the circumstances in which it had been found, as well as the footmarks apparent in the stable-yard, Mr. Middleton proceeded to read the depositions of the housekeeper and the housemaid, and to state all that he had heard from poor Edmonds's son, and from the people who had first effected an entrance into the house that morning. When he had done this, and, as he termed it, carried the case to that point, he paused and looked round with the consciousness of having made a very neat and compact statement, deserving of some credit.

Mr. Quatterly, however, stepped in to prevent him enjoying his self-satisfaction too long. "Well, sir," he said, "and how does that affect the gentleman before you?"

"You shall hear in a few minutes, sir," answered Mr. Middleton, solemnly raising himself from his chair, and looking over the table at Morton's feet; "you must have remarked that the footsteps which were traced in the yard were of three distinct sizes. One very large and long, one somewhat smaller, and one very small and neat, precisely what is usually called a gentleman's footprint."

"Well, sir," said Mr. Quatterly, "what of that?" But Mr. Middleton did not choose to take any notice of the solicitor, and went on to say, addressing Dr. Western, "You will see

here, my dear sir, the deposition of one Gibbs, taken by myself and Sir Simon Uppelstone on the seventeenth of this month, by which it appears that on the very night when Mallington Hall was before attempted, and one of the windows forced, the notorious Jack Williams was seen in the park in earnest conversation with this very Mr. Morton—in Mallington Park, I say, where neither of them had any right to be at that hour, except for illegal purposes."

Morton smiled, and Mr. Quatterly, as usual, rubbed his hands, saying, "A new dictum in law, I think—that men have a right to be in another man's park for illegal purposes. However, my dear sir, I deny the whole position, and beg that, before you assume that Mr. Morton had no right to be there, you will prove it; whether you do or not, I'll prove the contrary."

"How so, sir," demanded Mr. Middleton, growing furious.

"By and by, by and by," said Mr. Quatterly, nodding his head; "let us have the whole case first. Pray, read the deposition, Dr. Western, for, as the warrant I see is dated on that day, it may be of consequence."

Dr. Western put on his spectacles, and read, smiling when he came to the assertion that his young friend was known by another name than that of Morton, and saying, as a commentary, "I am well aware of that fact; and am afraid I must plead guilty to being an accessory."

When he had gone on to the end, Mr. Middleton proceeded, explaining to his brother magistrates what had taken place, but very much in the tone of a public accuser, rather than that of a justice of the peace. "It is proved by numerous witnesses," he continued, "that this gentleman, whoever he may be, was constantly seen hanging about Mallington Park, and Mallington Hall—that he obtained admission more than once into the house, and examined it most curiously—that he made himself acquainted with the habits of the people upon the estate, and learned at what time they were least upon their guard. It was also proved, or can be proved, that he absented himself from Mallington without any apparent cause, or giving any notice of his departure, from the morning of Saturday till the morning of Sunday, in which interval the robbery and murder were committed. We have seen that the criminals who committed the act must have been well acquainted with the house, and must have gained information of all the usual proceedings of the servants; that one set of footmarks was small and neat—very like those which would be left by the prisoner's feet; and that he has been seen consorting by night, and when he thought himself unobserved, with some of the most desperate characters in the county. Now, I must say, and must contend," and he thumped the table with his fist, "that there is perfectly sufficient before us to send the case to a jury, even if there were no other evidence to be produced, which I am informed there is, and evidence of a very important character too."

"I've seen an innocent man hanged upon less," said Mr. Quatterly dryly, and Louisa Charlton started and looked at him for a moment with tears and surprise.

The lady of the house had sat while all this was going on with her arm thrown over the

back of her chair, her two pretty little feet extended, and her head drooping a little forward, with an air of studied but graceful attention. Slight, very slight, indications of what was passing in her mind floated over her countenance from time to time; but now, when Mr. Middleton turned towards her, saying "Mrs. Charlton, I think —," she rose and advanced towards the table with a melancholy and reluctant air, "I have very little evidence to give, sir," she said, "myself; and as you all know what kindness and attention I have shown to Mr. Morton, and what esteem, and I may say regard, I once entertained for him, you will easily conceive how painful that evidence must be, especially as it is confirmatory of the worst suspicions that are entertained. Mr. Morton has been, as Mr. Middleton says, absent from my house, where he was on a visit, from Saturday morning till this morning at about a quarter to ten—at least, that was the first time I saw him, though I am afraid there is clear proof of his having been in the house previously, without my knowledge. Just before I met him coming up the stairs, and apparently freshly arrived, I was called out of the drawing-room by the upper housemaid, who informed me that she had found in Mr. Morton's room, wrapped up in a bundle, and thrust under the drawers, a sort of carman's frock, stained with blood, and a jacket in the same condition, with a good deal of mud and dirt upon it, but having the whole sleeve still wet with gore. Not having heard, at the time, of the barbarous murder of poor Edmonds, and never dreaming that there was any one in my house who could commit such an act, I took no particular notice, but said that it must be some accident, and ordered her to leave the things where she found them. She is here present, and can give her own testimony. These blood-stained clothes are, I suppose, where they were first discovered!"

"Yes, ma'am," said the housemaid, dropping a courtesy.

"The bloody-minded villain!" murmured Miss Mathilda Martin, giving a look of horror at Morton, whose face certainly testified some astonishment.

"A pretty little concatenation," said Mr. Quatterly. "Pray, sir, let us have the things down. You can take the evidence of the housemaid while they are being brought."

Mrs. Charlton immediately ordered one of the men servants to go up and fetch the bundle, describing where it was to be found, and laying particular stress upon the words "In Mr. Morton's room."

The housemaid was then called upon for her testimony, and fully confirmed Mrs. Charlton's account, adding that she had found the marks of some dirty footsteps up the stairs that morning. She was just concluding when the servant returned with the bundle, which was speedily spread out upon the table.

"Look to Miss Charlton," cried Dr. Western, "she is going to faint."

"No!" said Louisa, rising; "but I wish to give my evidence, terrible as it is."

"Stop a little, my dear," said Mr. Quatterly, patting her gently on the hand. "Do not alarm yourself; this will all be made clear."

"Not without dreadful consequences," said Louisa, taking her seat again, and covering her eyes with her hand.

Each of the magistrates examined the frock and jacket carefully; and then Mr. Middleton, rising, said in a solemn and pompous tone, "Sir Simon, I think this is quite sufficient, and that we are not only justified, but called upon by our duty to commit the prisoner for trial; is it not so, Dr. Western?"

"Oh dear, no!" answered the clergyman; "we can do no such thing, for I happen to know that it is utterly impossible that Mr. Morton can have had any share in this transaction."

Mrs. Charlton fixed her beautiful blue eyes upon him, with not the sweetest expression in the world, and Mr. Quatterly, advancing a step, remarked, "You are in a mighty hurry, worshipful sir. I should have thought it was to-day that the fox-hounds were to meet. One story is very good till another is told, and by your good leaves, you must now hear that other. You have made a very good story of it, and I must say that a capital special pleader was spoiled when nature turned you into a country squire; but now we will proceed in order, if you please, for you have made various assumptions, and thrown out various insinuations, of which I must clear the case."

"I beg, sir, that you would treat the court with respect," exclaimed Mr. Middleton, half rising.

"With the most profound," said Mr. Quatterly, "as deep as a draw-well, though not, perhaps, quite so clear. We will admit almost all your premises; but strip them, if you please, of your deductions. In the first place, the prisoner, for reasons of his own, did choose, in coming down here, to assume a name different from that by which he usually goes, though still one that he has a right to, for his name is Edmond Morton, as I can testify. In the next place he was seen—at least I have no doubt that such was the case—in Mallington Park, speaking with that very notorious person, Jack Williams, who is, I am happy to tell you, now in custody. I have no doubt, either, that their conversation was earnest, nay, perhaps, very vehement; but, as to your assumption that neither of them had any right there, that I have before denied, and do still deny."

"Upon what grounds, sir," demanded Mr. Middleton, beginning to find his ideas getting a little confused.

"Upon the best of all possible grounds," answered Mr. Quatterly, "as you shall hear. Jack Williams, perhaps, had no right there—I am not aware that he had. It is not in evidence, and yet it might be so, for if Mr. Morton invited him he had a right, and therefore your assumption in his case is as unwarranted as in the other. But in regard to Mr. Morton, I not only contend that he had a right, but that nobody on earth, let his condition, state, rank, or calling be what they may, had so good a right to be in Mallington Park, at any hour of the day or night which unto him might seem expedient; for, who can have so good a title to walk in a park—Mallington Park or any other—as the owner thereof?"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Middleton, "has

Mr. Morton purchased the park! I did not know it could be sold."

"You have got a capital case of circumstantial evidence," continued Mr. Quatterly, enjoying the evident consternation and surprise of the profound magistrate, and now I will tell you what you were going to commit a man for. For breaking into his own house, robbing his own plate-room, and shooting his own park-keeper. All these circumstances are very probable! Reason and likelihood go with them. But stay a minute—don't be in a hurry, either on one side or the other. We will have the whole matter clear before we have done with it, if you please. You shall have full evidence that the gentleman now before you is the proprietor of Mallington Park, of Mallington Hall, and of everything that it contains, and that the poor man who lost his life there was his servant, and had been receiving wages from him for some time."

"I told you you were going too fast, Middleton," whispered Sir Simon Uppicestone across Dr. Western.

"Pish!" cried Mr. Middleton, in a high state of excitement, and Mr. Quatterly went on, saying, "As to Mr. Morton's absence from this place from Saturday morning till Monday morning, that can be easily accounted for. But it may be sufficient for our present purpose to show where that gentleman was at the time the murder was committed. Now, up to the hour of half-past seven o'clock, he was, with myself and Dr. Western, at the distance of two and twenty miles from Mallington; he then set off in a hack post-chaise, and a dark night, intending, I believe, to sleep here; but the chaise unfortunately broke down some seven miles from this place, about ten o'clock. He reached a public house, called the Hand-in-Hand, about four miles off, towards eleven, and remained there till this morning, at about half-past eight, when he left it to walk hither, without ever quitting the house in the interval. It may seem to the sagacity of your worships somewhat extraordinary that I should come here so well prepared to meet this case; and as justice is a very suspicious person, and to peep out from under her bandage, just to see that nobody is playing her a trick, this fact must be explained also. The truth, then, is, that as Dr. Western and myself were driving over hither from the town of —, we came upon Mr. Morton's post-chaise, with the axle broken and one of the wheels off, and with a man doing his best to pull it further to pieces for the purpose of mending it. The post-boy who drove it was in the act of giving him instructions to that effect, and by him we were informed that the late tenant of his vehicle had the night before gone on to the Hand-in-Hand, two or three miles further, and, stopping there to water the horses, we had a full, true, and particular account from the landlady of the arrival and departure of her guest, for whom we inquired. There sits Dr. Western, who can corroborate my evidence."

Dr. Western bowed his head and said "Entirely."

"And now," continued Mr. Quatterly; but Mr. Middleton interrupted him, beginning to find that he was in what is usually termed the

wrong box. "Oh!" he exclaimed, "if all these circumstances can be so clearly explained, the great weight of suspicion is removed; but still it would be satisfactory to all parties if the whole were cleared up, and, perhaps, Mr. Morton will assign the cause of his meeting with Williams, who is certainly not fit society for a gentleman of property."

"That is very easily explained, sir," replied Morton. "It may be in your recollection, and certainly is in Dr. Western's, that I was knocked down upon the common here, and on that occasion I lost a pocket-book, containing the certificate of my grandfather's marriage, and various other papers of considerable importance. I sent for a Bow-street officer from London, and offered a reward for the recovery of the papers. We found that the parties who possessed them comprehended their value, and thought that I might be induced to give a much larger sum for them than I had offered. They opened a communication with me to that effect, and a place of meeting was appointed, first in Wenlock Wood, and subsequently in Mallington Park. I went to the rendezvous, as agreed upon, alone, and not having been able to come to satisfactory terms with the man Williams, the person who met me there, I was walking back again, when I saw somebody scampering off, who, it now seems, was the worthy gentleman with his fragrant Balm of Trinidad. Such is the plain state of the case, as there are several persons here who know; and if there be anything else that requires explanation, it must be given, as the whole of this matter had better be cleared up at once, especially the placing of these bloody clothes in the room which I lately occupied, for I should wish to be quite sure that malice had no part in such a proceeding."

"Oh! hush, hush," said a faint voice behind him.

But Mr. Middleton replied, without attending to those sounds. "That is just what I was going to observe, sir," he said, "it is very necessary that that fact should be explained. It seems clear to me that these clothes on which the blood is not yet dry, as you perceive, must have belonged to the person who committed the crime. Now, how came they in this house? How came they in that room? That is the question. Soames, you had better call all the servants up, and let my man and Sir Simon's aid you, with any persons you can collect near, to ensure that nobody quits the house without permission."

Mrs. Charlton displayed at this moment a considerable degree of agitation. Whether it was that her emotion proceeded from disappointed rage, or that some faint shadow of the truth crossed her mind, or that she felt apprehensive that any of her servants should have been implicated in so horrible a deed, I cannot tell; but, certain it is, that she moved about with a certain sort of nervous uneasiness in her chair, and seemed twice as if she was about to speak. She did not do so, however, and it was Mr. Quatterly who proceeded as soon as the magistrate had done. "There are one or two other questions, in the first place, I should like to establish," he said; "as the charge has been made against Mr. Morton, it is necessary

to trace his whole course, and therefore I wish to question some of the servants, if you have no objection, gentlemen."

"None whatever," said Sir Simon Upplstone.

"Not in the least," replied Mr. Middleton, courteously.

"I would fain know, then," continued Mr. Quatterly, "who it was that let this gentleman in this morning?"

"I did, sir," answered the man Wilkinson, stepping forward.

"At what hour was that?" demanded Mr. Quatterly.

"It might be half-past nine, or a quarter to ten," was the servant's reply.

"What did Mr. Morton then do?" inquired Mr. Quatterly.

"He walked straight up stairs towards the drawing-room," answered Wilkinson, "and met my mistress at the drawing-room door."

"You are quite sure that he did not go up to his room?" said Mr. Quatterly.

"Quite sure," replied the servant, "for I heard him speak to my mistress immediately, and saw them go into the drawing-room together."

"I will only remark," proceeded the solicitor, "that, from the lady's evidence, these articles were found before she met Mr. Morton. I will now ask, however, whether any one saw that gentleman in the house, or about the house, before he was admitted by the footman?"

There was a complete silence; and he went on, "Then, now, Mr. What's-your name, which door did Mr. Morton come in by? There are more doors than one to the house, I suppose."

"He came in by the great gates, sir," answered the man. "The bell rang, and I opened the door of the house, and went out to let him in."

"Then he was actually without the garden-wall when you first saw him," said Mr. Quatterly.

Wilkinson assented, and the lawyer went on, "Was the house-door locked or open?"

"It was locked when I got up, sir," said the house-maid; "but I opened it to sweep out the hall."

"Well, then, my pretty girl," continued the solicitor, "since you are upon your legs, I'll ask you a question or two, with their worships' leave. You said just now that you had found dirty footmarks up the stairs. When did you make that discovery?"

"When first I got up, sir," said the girl; "as soon as I had taken down the shutters off the glass-door into the garden I saw them directly, first upon the mat, and then upon the stairs, and upon the oil-cloth, too, for that matter."

"Then they began at the glass-door going into the garden," said Mr. Quatterly, "and went up stairs. How far could you trace them?"

"Why, as far as Mr. Alfred's room," replied the girl.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Quatterly, and Dr. Western suddenly raised his head with a look of horror and consternation.

"Were the marks plain there?" demanded the solicitor, still addressing the house-maid.

"There was a piece of mud and some gravel

stones," replied the girl; "but they were not so plain as below."

"Could you track them any further?" was the solicitor's next question.

"I didn't remark them," she said.

"Did you go into that room?" demanded Mr. Quatterly.

"No, sir," replied the girl; "I had all the lower part of the house to do first; and when I went up after our breakfast I first went to Mr. Morton's room, to open the windows there. It lies at the other end of the passage, you know."

"No, I don't know," answered Mr. Quatterly.

"What may be the distance?"

"Oh, not ten steps," answered the girl. "Mr. Alfred's is just over Miss Louisa's room, and the other is down two doors beyond."

"Was the glass door open or shut?" inquired Mr. Quatterly.

"It was locked, but not bolted," said the house-maid.

"I bolted it last night with my own hands," observed the butler, who had entered the room, with the cook and several other servants, a minute or two before; but Mr. Quatterly went on, still addressing the house-maid, "Were you up first in the house?" he demanded.

"No, sir," replied the girl, beginning to get a little bewildered. "I think Mrs. Windsor and the still room maid were down before me."

"We were," said Mrs. Windsor, "and I found the door unlocked, and locked it till the men got up. I have got more to say when it is wanted; but I think my young lady can tell more than any of us."

Mr. Quatterly looked from the housekeeper to Louisa; but Miss Charlton's eyes were fixed upon her step-mother, who sat opposite, fixed and immovable as a statue, with her face pale and her head bent down. There was a pause for a moment, and then Louisa rose and with somewhat trembling steps advancing to the table, spoke across the table to Dr. Western in a low tone, "You had better take her away," she said; "you had better take her away."

The worthy rector instantly rose, and going round to Mrs. Charlton, he said, "I think it would be best for you to retire, my dear lady. You are not well. This is too much for you."

But Mrs. Charlton instantly raised her head, quickly and sharply exclaiming, "No! It's all false; but I'll hear it all, I'll hear it all."

"Be advised," said Dr. Western, in a tender tone.

"No, I will not," she cried; "I understand it all. Go on, go on," and Dr. Western, retiring from her side, resumed his seat. Louisa had by this time retired to the chair where she had been sitting, and stood trembling beside it with a face very pale, and her lips almost bloodless.

"You said you had evidence to give, my dear," said Mr. Quatterly; "will you give it now, or shall I examine this good lady first?"

Louisa hesitated, but Mrs. Charlton exclaimed vehemently, "I demand that one should be sent out of the room, while the other speaks. They will frame their stories one upon the other, I dare say, if they have not done it already."

Louisa said nothing, but moved towards the

door. Mrs. Windsor, however, replied, "I haven't spoken to Miss Charlton to-day, ma'am—not a word—and have only to tell the truth, though I am afraid what I am going to say may offend her."

"Tell the truth, Mrs. Windsor," said Louisa, turning at the door, "whatever it may be—your so doing will give me no offence, be assured."

"A pretty scene!" cried Mrs. Charlton, with a look of contempt.

"Now, ma'am, what have you to depose?" said Sir Simon Upplestone, who was getting heartily tired of the affair, and wished it over.

"Why, merely this, sir," said Mrs. Windsor. "Last night, as I was lying awake in bed, I heard somebody walking in the garden. My room is at the far corner, just over Mr. Morton's. I can't tell what o'clock it was, for I had gone to sleep for a short time when I first laid down; but it could not be very late, for the moon was still far up. However, thinking that it might be somebody that wanted to rob the house, I got up and went to the window, and there I saw a man below on the gravel walk, who seemed to throw some stones up towards Miss Charlton's room. He then called out, but not very loud, 'Louisa, Louisa,' which is her name. He then seemed to make signs to her to open the window, and presently I could plainly hear it thrown up. After that, he asked her to come down and open the door, for he would come in. After that, I could hear Miss Charlton say she would call one of the servants to let him in; but he answered not to do so on any account; but to come down herself, and he spoke sharply and angrily to her; after which she told him to wait a minute and she would. He seemed very careful to tell her not to wake any one, saying that he did not wish it to be known that he was there. After waiting a minute or two, I could plainly hear the door below unchained, unbolted, and unlocked; and the minute after a foot coming quickly up the stairs, stopped at Mr. Latimer's door, and went in. It did not come as far as Mr. Morton's room, then, but after about two minutes I heard it come along the passage, and some one opened the door of Mr. Morton's room, which is just below mine—the bed-room, not the dressing-room, I mean."

"Ay, it was in the bed-room, under the drawers, I found the things," said the housemaid.

"Whoever it was did not stay there a minute," continued Mrs. Windsor, "and then went back and down stairs. He seemed to stop a minute at Miss Louisa's door, and then went down and out into the garden. As soon as I heard the garden door shut I went back to the window again, and I saw the same man go along the gravel walk, and take the first turning to the left towards the wall. I could see him quite plain, for the night was clear."

She paused, and Mr. Quatterly inquired, "Did you ever see him before?"

"Yes, often," replied Mrs. Windsor, in a firm but solemn tone.

"Do you see him now?" demanded Mr. Quatterly.

"No," replied Mrs. Windsor, fixing her eyes full upon Morton.

"Was he the man before you?" asked Mr. Quatterly again.

"Certainly not," answered the housekeeper.

"Then that is all I have to do with the affair," rejoined the solicitor, taking a step back.

"Then who do you really think it was?" demanded Mr. Middleton.

"I think and fully believe," replied Mrs. Windsor, "that it was Mr. Alfred Latimer. His person, perhaps, I could not swear to, for when first he came he seemed strangely disguised; and though, when he went away, he was differently dressed, his back was towards me; but his voice I could swear to anywhere, and he called Miss Charlton, sister, too, which he sometimes did when—"

"Liar and hussy!" cried Mrs. Charlton, starting up and stamping her foot; but Mr. Middleton, whose views were now altogether changed, exclaimed, "We must not have anything of this kind, madam. The case must be investigated fully. Shall we call in Miss Charlton?"

"I think you had better first inquire how the person was dressed," said Mr. Quatterly, "and also call in the gardener, for footsteps must have been remarked."

All the magistrates assented to this course; and in regard to the apparel of the person she had seen, Mrs. Windsor replied, "That when first she saw him, he was dressed in a carman's frock, such as that which lay on the table; but that, when he went away, he had on a dark coat such as Mr. Latimer usually wore."

A pause ensued, not pleasant even to the somewhat obtuse Mr. Middleton, for he was one of those men of action who are uncommonly puzzled when they have nothing to talk about; and the presence of Mrs. Charlton was a burden upon all the other gentlemen present, who showed no inclination to speak themselves, or to indulge him by listening to anything he could say. Feeling strongly convinced that nothing which could transpire would be aught but painful to Mrs. Charlton's ears, Dr. Western resolved, in charity, to make one more effort to induce her to retire; but when he again approached her chair she repulsed him rudely and scornfully, and the good man sat down, grieved, but not offended.

At length the gardener was brought in and questioned, and seeing the frowning countenance of his mistress, and the grave expression upon every face around, he instantly became possessed by that truly English demon, the fear of committing himself, and sturdily resolved to know nothing. Mr. Middleton, however, piqued himself on that art—the meanest of all forensic tricks—the art of cross-examination; and as Mr. Quatterly rested satisfied with having cleared his client, and did not show any disposition to assist or interfere, the worthy magistrate took the task upon himself.

"Pray, gardener," he said, "what did you remark particular in the garden this morning when you first came in?"

"Nothing particular, sir," replied the gardener steadily.

"Oh, of course," said Mr. Middleton, with a laugh; "from what I have seen of the garden, I know that you never look to anything but the cabbage-beds; but you can at least say whether you saw anything particular in them."

"I look to every part of the garden," replied the man, nettled—"cabbage-beds too, though

the under-gardener has more to do with them ; but I see that they are all right, morning and evening."

"We had better send for the under-gardener," said Mr. Middleton, aloud. "We shall gain no information from this fellow ; he is clearly incompetent. You take no notice of the bowling-green or the gravel-walks, I suppose, my good man ; it's the under-gardener who mows and rolls them, I suppose."

"Much you know about it !" answered the gardener. "There's no bowling-green here ; and as to the gravel walks, though he rolls them, I see when they want rolling. Why, it is only within the last blessed half-hour that I ordered him to roll the gravel under the windows, and up the great straight walk, and the little serpentine, to take out the foot-marks."

"Your own foot-marks !" said Mr. Middleton, in an indifferent tone. "No one has been out in the garden but yourself and the man, I understand."

"Some one has, since last night," said the gardener, "that I can swear, for there were prints all the way along that were neither mine nor his'n ;" and having been led thus far, the poor fellow was soon driven to give an accurate description of the traces of Alfred Latimer's feet from the wall to the house and back again. He was then dismissed, with a warning neither to go near the footsteps himself nor to suffer the under-gardener to roll them out if it were not done already ; and then Louisa Charlton was summoned to give her evidence, Mr. Middleton merely observing upon the gardener's testimony, "Exactly the same as those of the smaller prints at Mallington Hall."

Louisa entered more calmly than she had departed. She was still very pale, and her steps still wavered. Her heart, too, sank, and she felt afraid that her voice would fail her when she came to speak ; but she had had time for thought, she had had time to ask herself what was her duty, and the voice within at once answered, "To tell the plain truth." It was a terrible thing indeed to bear any part in destroying one whose young years had been spent under the same roof with herself, who had been accustomed to call her sister, whom she had often aided and befriended, for whose willfulness and vices she had often mourned—but still she felt that she must not let such feelings take from her her truth ; and, though she resolved not to offer aught in evidence against him that was not drawn from her by questions, yet she was determined to answer each question truly, without a shadow of turning.

If, however, she expected to escape close questioning, she was mistaken ; for as soon as she entered, Dr. Western having first requested her to take a seat, Mr. Middleton proceeded to interrogate her in a way that left no opportunity of passing aught over in silence, taking as a text both Mrs. Windsor's account ; and having gained the admission that some one had come under the window a little after twelve, had thrown up some pebbles against it, and called her by name, he in plain terms directed her to state all that had occurred between that period and her retiring to rest. Louisa told all truly, but as succinctly as possible, often stopped and questioned as she went, and still giving true

and straightforward answers, till at length just as she was replying that Alfred Latimer was dressed when he came in a carman's frock—the very one, she believed, upon the table—Mrs. Charlton, seeing that the proofs against her unhappy son were all too clear, and that, in her own malignity and covetousness, she had been the person to bring them all to light, exclaimed almost with a shriek, "Oh, treacherous girl !" and in a vain effort to reach the door fell fainting almost at Mr. Morton's feet.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE fainting of Mrs. Charlton caused, as may be supposed, a good deal of confusion in the little court of inquiry held in her back drawing-room ; and there were few who did not feel some degree of pity for her situation. Miss Mathilda Martin, indeed, muttered something about pride having a fall, and declared that she had always known how it would be ; but sympathy was the prevailing feeling amongst the rest of those assembled, and Morton himself raised her, and bore her to the sofa in the next room. Louisa stood by her, and, aided by the servants, used all the ordinary means to recall her to consciousness ; but when she began to revive, and good Mr. Nethersole, the surgeon, who had been sent for, appeared, Dr. Western, who had long before this acquired a deep insight into Mrs. Charlton's nature, took Louisa by the hand, saying, "Come away, my love. You will still be wanted to give further evidence, and your presence here will only irritate her."

Louisa was well aware that what he said was true, but yet she would fain have remained to proffer her services at least. Mr. Middleton, however, interfered, saying, "Leave her with Mr. Nethersole, Miss Charlton, and let us return to business. We may want you, Nethersole, after you have done here ; so just step in when the lady has recovered."

When once set forms of any kind are disarranged, it is a very difficult thing to get them into order again ; and bodies of men thrown by any little circumstance into confusion, are very like certain birds which were once very common in England, and are still occasionally seen in the less cultivated parts of the country. These are called ruffs and roes, and very beautiful and graceful birds they are ; but they have the extraordinary habit that as soon as a flight has alighted each bird forms for itself a peculiar circle, and runs round therein upon its long legs with very great rapidity. As long as each keeps to its own district, all goes on as harmoniously as in the planetary system ; but the moment that any one of them, either from accident, fright, carelessness, or that perversity which is nearly as common amongst birds as amongst human beings, ventures into the circle of his neighbor, everything becomes confusion, and a general battle commences, during which hundreds of them are taken at a time.

Now, the fainting of Mrs. Charlton, like one of the ruffs getting out of his place, threw magistrates, solicitors, constables, and witnesses all out of their orbits, and for at least a quarter of an hour after they had returned to the room,

where the investigation had been going on, a confused, desultory, gabbling conversation took place, of which it is impossible to give any adequate description. Mr. Middleton talked in a loud voice with Mr. Skinner and Mr. Quatterly, the latter of whom treated him with various nursery rhymes, and sundry puns, till Mr. Middleton was left in a state of doubt as to whether he was mad, or laughing at him. Dr. Western spoke in a low voice with Morton and Louisa; Mr. Soames, in very choice English, of its own particular kind, harangued the butler and footman; and Miss Mathilda Martin expatiated to the female servants upon her own wisdom, wit, and discrimination, informing them that she had foreseen the whole affair, and told Mr. Middleton all about it, before it began—an assertion the truth of which the reader has had the means of discovering. She added sundry dry and pungent insinuations regarding Mrs. Charlton, which were not unpalatable to most of her hearers; for, strange to say, notwithstanding all her grace and sweetness, Mrs. Charlton was not very much loved and respected by any of her household. False money may deceive for a time; but keep it for a while in your pocket, and the gilding is sure to wear off.

The only person who kept silence in the room was Mrs. Windsor, and she, as usual, looked quietly about her, and made up her mind as to what was to be done, listening to everybody with decent attention, and catching words and sentences here and there, which were not intended for her ear.

The first thing that had a tendency to give order to this chaos was the entrance of Mr. Nethersole; but even he, important personage as he was, had to move through the crowd unattended to, till he called attention by saying, "Ahem! Mr. Middleton. Ahem! Sir Simon. Did you wish for my presence, gentlemen?"

"Oh, yes, yes, certainly," said Mr. Middleton; "but really I think we had better take our places again."

"How did you leave Mrs. Charlton?" demanded Dr. Western, as the magistrates moved towards their seats.

"Pretty well, pretty well," replied the surgeon, with a mysterious air. "She seems in great grief, though; a slight disposition to hysteria coming on, so I have administered a few drops of the fetid spirit of ammonia, and shall follow it up by-and-by with some sulphuric ether. Poor dear lady, I have had her removed to her own room, and recommended the recumbent position, as she seems in great grief."

"Is that a good remedy for grief, doctor?" asked Mr. Quatterly. "I know that by the vulgar, the *fruges consumere nati*, lying is considered a remedy for many evils, but I did not know it was for grief."

Mr. Nethersole stared, and Dr. Western, with a melancholy shake of the head, and his eyes bent down, as if speaking to himself more than to any one else, said, "Well may she be grieved! these are the effects of indulgence and neglect."

"Now let us to business," said Mr. Middleton. "There are one or two other questions, Miss Charlton, which I wish to ask you before we proceed with Mr. Nethersole's evidence. Be so kind as to take that seat again, and we shall soon have done. In the first place, are

you quite sure and certain, beyond all doubt and dubitation whatever, that the person to whom you gave admittance last night was absolutely and distinctly Mr. Alfred Latimer?"

"I am but too certain, sir," replied Louisa, in a low and sad, but clear tone.

"It was quite dark at the time," said Mr. Middleton, anxious to show his acumen; "the person you saw was disguised, that is to say, clothed in unusual apparel, if it was Mr. Latimer; the moon, at that time, must have been, I think, at the southern angle of the house, so as not to shine in at the door. Now, could you see his face so distinctly as to be able to swear that it was he?"

"I took one of the candles from my dressing-table," answered Louisa, "and he took it out of my hand at the door, so that I could not help seeing his face. Indeed, sir, I should be but too willing to doubt, were it possible."

"Don't be frightened, my dear young lady, don't be frightened," said Mr. Middleton; "we only wish to make the whole matter quite clear, that is all. He took the candle from you, you say. Did he bring it back again to you when he went away?"

"He might bring it to my door, perhaps," replied Louisa; "but I would not let him in, for I was frightened at his appearance and manner, and at the time thought he had gone mad."

"Did he speak to you at the door of your room, my dear?" asked Dr. Western.

"He spoke through the door," said Louisa, "and bade me tell no one that he had been here."

"Now let the housemaid and the constable go up to Mr. Alfred Latimer's room, and examine two things—first, whether there is there a candlestick belonging to Miss Charlton's dressing-table. I suppose you will know it, young woman?"

"Oh dear, yes, sir," said the housemaid, "it is quite different from the others in the house."

"And next let them see if they can trace the steps there," continued Mr. Middleton. "Have you swept it out yet, young woman?"

"No, your worship," replied the housemaid, "I have not been in it yet at all, because—"

"Never mind because," said Mr. Middleton; "we don't want any excuses. Go away with the constable. Bring down an accurate report, Soames, of all that you see and find.—Now, Mr. Nethersole, we will take your evidence, if you please."

Mr. Nethersole advanced, and Mr. Middleton proceeded to inquire whether he had visited the Hall and examined the body of poor Edmonds, the park-keeper. Having replied that he had, he was directed to state what remarks he had made, and what he supposed to be the cause of his death, though Mr. Quatterly justly observed that this was evidence rather for the coroner's inquest than the magistrates.

"I found a wound," he said, "in both sides of the head, which, from the appearance it presented was caused by a pistol ball fired from the right side, where it cut the temporal artery and passed through the anterior lobe of the brain, finding exit on the right side, about two inches above the eyebrow."

Sir Simon Upplestone had said nothing for some time, and he owned to himself that Mr. Middleton was the dominant spirit; but still he

thought he ought to have his share of importance, and might as well ask a solemn question too, to throw light or darkness on the matter, as the case might be. "Pray, Mr. Nethersole," he said, "did you use any means of resuscitation?"

There are some questions so utterly confounding that the wit of the most ingenious man on earth cannot find a ready answer to them, and Mr. Nethersole, with the most profound respect for the worthy baronet, and every desire to answer as fast as possible, could only stare in silence for a full minute, at being asked whether he had attempted to restore a man to life who had been shot through and through the head nearly twelve hours before.

"We have an authentic record," said Mr. Quatterly, in a low voice, "of a man having burnt his mouth by eating cold plum porridge, and of another man having bitten his own nose off, so that it is clear nothing is impossible; and therefore, whatever others may think, I hold the question to be a very sensible one."

"My dear sir, I can't just upon the subject," said Morton, to whom the words were addressed. But, as Sir Simon Upplestone evidently waited for an answer, Mr. Nethersole at last made shift to say, "Why, no, Sir Simon, I did not think it would be of any avail, for I never knew a man to recover with his brains blown out; and, besides, the poor fellow had been dead many hours, the limbs were quite rigid, so it could have answered no purpose."

"I think I would have tried something," said Sir Simon, sagely.

Mr. Middleton contrived to occupy about five minutes more with questions of somewhat greater sagacity, but not much more pertinence; and at the end of that time the constable and the housemaid reappeared.

"Well, Soames, well," cried Mr. Middleton, "what have you discovered?"

"Why, I found this here candlestick, your worship," answered the constable, putting one down on the table. "It's burnt out in the socket, you see, sir, and scattered all the wax about. It was a-top of the drawers in Mr. Latimer's room. It might have set the house a-fire. Then, as to the footsteps, we traced two or three of them in straight from the door up to the drawers, and one of the drawers had been pulled open, for we saw the mark of a hand upon it, somewhat dirty, and not quite dry, and the same is on the candlestick, if you'll look; and then on the floor, tumbled down, with the top off, was a hat-box, which the girl says had a new hat in it yesterday; but the hat is gone now, howsoever; and there were two finger-marks on the top."

"Did you find any steps towards Mr. Morton's room?" asked Mr. Middleton.

"Why, no, sir," said the constable; "but the girl says she swept the passage and the room. We found nothing particular there, though I went over it just to see underneath the drawers, where the bundle had been stowed away; the carpet was somewhat bloody—not much, just a scratch of blood, like; but that shows that the job couldn't have been long done, or the things would have been dry."

"Very true, very true," said Mr. Middleton; and, turning to Morton, he said, "I think, sir, the evidence given clears you of all suspicion."

"Then you'll have the goodness to dismiss the warrant," said Mr. Quatterly.

"I think we ought to have evidence," said Sir Simon Upplestone, "that the gentleman is really the proprietor of Mallington Hall, for on that rests a great deal of the matter."

"Not a whit," replied Mr. Quatterly. "If he had no other property than a mortgage on the moon there is not one suspicious circumstance against him. But the evidence you shall have—the evidence you shall have. There is your own clerk, a very respectable solicitor, whom you all know. He can testify to the fact."

"I beg leave to depose," said Mr. Skinner, rising and speaking with due deliberation, "that this gentleman, commonly called and known by, in these parts, the name of Mr. Morton, is the undoubted proprietor of Mallington Hall, and the Mallington Park estate, together with all the goods, chattels, household furniture, books, pictures, plate, and appurtenances therein contained, or belonging thereto;" and down he sat, having said exactly what he thought sufficient, and not one word more.

Sir Simon Upplestone was frustrated; for, if truth must be told, a certain very ticklish propensity, easily excited in human beings, and called curiosity, was the true motive of the question he had put. He wanted to know, in short, who Mr. Morton was, and what, and all about him; and Mr. Quatterly saw through and through him as if he had been a piece of rock crystal. Not seeing, however, any new channel open for further inquiries, at least publicly, he determined, as the only probable chance of getting information, to cross-examine Mr. Skinner in private upon the very first opportunity, and consented that the warrant against Mr. Morton should be discharged forthwith.

"And now, Dr. Western," said Mr. Quatterly, "I think, my very reverend friend, that it will be expedient for you to inform your worshipful brethren of the facts which came to our knowledge this morning regarding two worthy gentlemen named Thomas Brown and John Williams, and also in regard to another personage called Mr. Alfred Laumer, against whom a slight case of suspicion has been made out this morning. Your worships will remark that I say slight; because it is very slight indeed, and though from the temper of the court it is evident that the young gentleman does not appear in a very favorable light, yet it must be recollected that nothing has been proved against him whatsoever as yet; but that he entered his own mother's house clandestinely and in disguise on the same night that this unhappy event occurred. The disguise, however, might have been assumed from a thousand different causes; the clandestine mode of his coming might be accounted for in various ways; and the blood which was found upon the clothes supposed to be cast off by him may be that of a hare, of a rabbit, or a barn-door fowl, for aught we know to the contrary."

"There, my dear," he continued, turning to Louisa, "go and tell that to your step-mother, it may be some comfort to her; and as for yourself, your white face and trembling hand shows that you have had quite enough of this business already."

Louisa felt that it was indeed as he said,

and rose to depart, and Morton very naturally accompanied her for a short time from the room—not, indeed, that he had the slightest intention of visiting Mrs. Charlton, as he was well aware that in the existing state of that lady's mind his presence was not likely to be peculiarly agreeable to her. It might be, though I will not pretend to say that it was, that Morton wished to have a few minutes' conversation with a person who was very dear to him; but at all events I shall beg leave to take advantage of their absence to detail the events to which Mr. Quatterly referred—not exactly in Dr. Western's own words, which were somewhat prolix, from the necessity of explaining to his brother magistrates many particulars to which the reader is already acquainted.

CHAPTER LXXV.

WHEN last we left Dr. Western and worthy Mr. Quatterly, previous to bringing them suddenly and unexpectedly to Mallington, where they have been acting and speaking throughout the last three chapters, they were standing before the small gate of the church of St. Stephen the Martyr, in the town of—*quod versus dicitur non est*. They were left there, too, to their own speculations; for, as may be remembered, the excellent constable, Mr. Higginthorp, had set off with almost superhuman velocity, to take hold of the collar of Jack Williams. Now, Mr. Higginthorp was a strong man—a very strong man indeed, considering his peculiar conformation, but that conformation gave him a tendency to topple over when any strong force was applied to the superior extremity of his person, which he was conscious of; and though it was as difficult to make Mr. Higginthorp let go his hold when once he had taken it, as a bull-dog or a shark, yet a sudden wrench, such as might be caused by a knock-down blow, sometimes had slipped a fustian jacket out of his fingers; and, therefore, when he saw his lean confederate coming slowly down the next street as he crossed it like a steam engine, he made him a sharp sign to follow, resolved “to make assurance doubly sure, and take a bond of fate,” though he would take no bail but leg bail of Jack Williams.

Neddy—for we know the sub-constable by no other name—was quick at taking a hint, and he followed not so rapidly, indeed, as Mr. Higginthorp ran, but with considerable speed, so that he had entered the main street of the town, and could see clear into the market-place when his superior had reached the latter. He there saw his superior slacken his pace, advance quietly behind two personages who were just turning into the door of the chief inn, and suddenly seize the shorter of the two by the collar of his coat. The person whom he thus grasped, without more ado, turned round and instantly struck the constable a blow between the eyes, which overset his bulk, and down Mr. Higginthorp went; but so firm was his grasp of the stout cloth, that down went Jack Williams upon him; and fixed like a vice tightly screwed, the constable held on with his right hand, while with his left, rolling over and tumbling in the kennel, he contrived with quiet and pertinacious reso-

lution to extract from the wide open pocket of his coat a pair of iron handcuffs, which, with marvelous dexterity, he essayed to slip over the wrists of his destined prey even in the midst of the fierce struggle that was going on between them. At the same time he shouted loud and strong, “Help, in the king’s name. I call upon all good men to aid and abet me in getting seizure of this horse felon!”

The landlord of the inn had retired into his domicile some five minutes before, after taking a draught of the morning air at the door, to get his breakfast; and one of the waiters and a helper in the stable, who had been standing under the arch, and saw the commencement of the affray, having no vocation for aiding constables, retreated immediately. But a stout shopkeeper of the town, and a hump-backed man who was walking with him, ran up and stopped Brown just as he was beating a retreat from what he conceived to be a lost battle; and Neddy coming up, well disciplined by Mr. Higginthorp, cast himself on the back of Jack Williams, and, directing his efforts to the one sole object of getting the handcuffs on his wrists, soon saw him powerless in his upper limbs.

“What the devil do you mean by attacking me in this way!” cried Jack Williams, whose policy now was to assume a different tone from that of resistance; “if you are a constable why did you not tell me so!”

“Oh, we always secure our man first, and then we tell him,” answered Mr. Higginthorp. “There’s more lost nor gained at any time by talking, Mr. Williams. I say, Jack, that was a wiper you gave me between the eyes. Winegar-like, it makes ‘em tingle. But, that’s all over; so now be quiet and easy, and come along, like two respectable gentlemen. Their wuships want a bit of a talk with you about that there job last night at Mallington Hall.”

But Jack Williams was not so easily led as young Blackmore, and he turned round his head to Brown, closing his teeth fast, and slightly raising his under lip, which the other received as a warning to be silent; and not being of an extremely loquacious disposition, signified his approval of the course recommended by a nod.

“Well, sir,” said Williams, with an air of as much dignity as could have been assumed by a captive prince, “I do not know what you are talking of, but if you have any charge against me, and are really a constable, you must take me in tow, and bring me to what port you like.”

“Any port’s good in a storm,” they says, Jack,” answered Mr. Higginthorp; “and so, as this here is blusterous weather for you, why I’ll just steer you to the nearest harbor, which is Mr. Muzzlewell’s justice-room. You’ll find friends there, I’m thinking, and that’s always mighty pleasant for the misfortunate.”

“Certainly,” replied Jack Williams, dryly, “only I’m not so misfortunate as you think, Master Constable, and you may be more so than you know of for the assault you have committed on me—so look to yourself.”

“I always does,” answered Mr. Higginthorp, “and a little to other folks too. But what signifies talking! Come along. I’ll trouble you, Mr. Gillaghan, jest to look arter that ere fellow along with Neddy—many thanks for leading a

hand to grab him. I'll take care o' this 'un; and we won't trouble you far.'

Thus saying, he walked on by the side of Williams, who went on calmly and quietly enough, revolving in his own mind the course to be pursued in the present emergency, and considering every means of escape that could suggest itself to a fertile imagination, long practised in extracting hope, and even success, from the most adverse circumstances. Had he been alone, he would have entertained no apprehension—few, indeed, he entertained none, for, both by habit of danger and by corporeal temporariness, he was incapable of terror. But in the present instance, he well knew that the folly or the indiscretion of any of those who were more or less his accomplices might produce a result fatal to himself and them; and his chief trust was that Alfred Latimer might be beyond pursuit, that Malthy might not be suspected, and that the habitual taciturnity of Brown might be only increased by the peril in which he stood. How suspicion had fallen upon himself, and how the crime he had committed had been so soon discovered, and the pursuit instituted so rapidly, puzzled him a little, and made him doubt that his person had been sufficiently disguised; but he resolved to wait and watch, to assume the air of perfect innocence and unconsciousness against any proofs, and studiously to seek for some means of escape from thralldom, even to the last. In some respects he had provided against all contingencies; he had, as we have seen, come into the town from the side opposite to Mallington; he had taken care that the ill-gotten wealth which he and Brown possessed should be concealed where little probability existed of its being discovered by other eyes than their own; and he had laid out with Brown and Alfred Latimer a story which they were all to tell in case of difficulty. Fortunately for his purpose, that story had at least some fact in it, and all be doubted was that Brown might be able to stand a cross-examination in regard to all the details.

Such were the thoughts that occupied him as he walked on in the handcuffs towards the house of the worthy and worshipful Mr. Muzzlewell; and as the streets of the town were not very crowded at that hour, even by urchins, he passed without the unpleasant accessory of a mob at his heels. Several persons were collected round the door, amongst whom was the clerk, waiting for admission, and some little bustle, as not unfrequently happens, took place when the two prisoners were led on through the midst. Williams had hitherto been kept at a distance from Brown, but here they were for an instant brought close together, and the former immediately took advantage of it to whisper, "The story we agreed upon in every particular!"

The next moment Williams was taken forward, and found himself suddenly in the presence of two of the magistrates of the town, while on the right of Mr. Muzzlewell appeared Dr. Western, and on the left of the other magistrate, Mr. Quatterly. With Dr. Western Jack Williams was unfortunately too well acquainted, having been compelled to visit him in his magisterial capacity more than once; but of the features of Mr. Quatterly he knew nothing, and

consequently set him down as one of the other magistrates of the town. Mr. Muzzlewell began the examination in the true justice of peace style of that day by exclaiming, "Well, prisoner what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Jack William sharply; "but that I think it devilish hard man can't walk along the streets peaceably and honestly without being collared by a constable just, I suppose, because at one time of my life when I was a mere boy, I was fond of a little poaching; but if there is law in the land I know whether you've all a right to do this."

Frustrated in this quarter, Mr. Muzzlewell had recourse to the constable. "Well, Higginthorp," he said, "what have you got to say to this? Why did you take this man in charge?"

"Why, your worship," said the constable, "took him in charge and the fellow as was with him, on account of a deposition made this morning by a 'cessary before the fact in regard to a notorious robbery as was to have been committed last night at a place called Mallington Hall, in this county."

"As was to have been committed!" said Dr. Western and Mr. Quatterly in the same breath. "Pray, Mr. Muzzlewell," continued the reverend gentleman, "does your constable mean to say that the robbery was not committed, then?"

"Pon my life, I don't know what he means to say," replied Mr. Muzzlewell, with a look of bewilderment; "there he is, ask him."

"I mean to say, your worship," said Mr. Higginthorp, taking the explanatory part of the matter upon himself, "that it was to have been committed, and might have been committed too, for that matter, for aught that I can say; but of that I know nothing. But the charge brings against the prisoners is, that whether they were guilty of robbery or not, that it is clear by the deposition of a 'cessary before the fact, that they were compounding a felony."

Mr. Quatterly gave a merry glance along the bench, and chuckled heartily, and seeing that Dr. Western was really and truly, in the simplicity of his heart, at a complete loss to know what the constable meant, and only more darkened by his explanation than he had been by his statement, he observed aloud, "I suppose by compounding of felony, he means laying a scheme to rob a house."

"That's it! You've hit it, my buck!" cried Mr. Higginthorp. "But what does it signify talking, there's the deposition taken down by myself, and witnessed by Neddy. There you can read it for yourselves. 'The deposition of John Blackmore, gardener'—I've got the boy in the lock-up, and we can examine him presently; and mind, I used no inducements; I told him all the time he was as likely to be hanged as not."

The paper was handed to the magistrates, and by the magistrates to their clerk, who proceeded to read it in a doxy, nasal, and rather solemn tone, which brought out all the rich absurdities of Mr. Higginthorp's peculiar style and orthography in the most prominent manner. Mr. Quatterly was enchanted. He had heard many curious specimens of composition before; but he had never met with anything equal to the present. But the whole business seemed

so absurd, that it produced on his mind an opinion rather favorable to the prisoners than otherwise, especially as he knew from what he had seen of Mr. Higginthorp's practice, on the preceding night, that he was a person very likely to use somewhat extraordinary measures to extract from young John Blackmore the confession before them.

As soon as Williams had heard it read, and perceived the whole and sole grounds upon which his apprehension had taken place, he saw the necessity of making a bold and vigorous effort to slip out from amongst the claws of justice before fresh and corroborative facts were brought against him. Assuming, therefore, a frank and innocent tone, he exclaimed, "It's all a lie—that is to say, not altogether a lie either, for there is some truth in it. There was some talk of there being a great lot of money in Mallington Hall, and what people might get by breaking in. But I remember quite well that I said that most likely they'd get their necks twisted if they did. Why the devil didn't the boy put that down? Well, then, it's true enough that I did send the young blackguard over on horseback to tell Mr. Latimer that all the business was found out about his having carried off Mr. Morton from Mallington, and that the story of his being a madman wouldn't do, so that his whole scheme was blown to pieces like a burst bomb-shell. And I did come over myself, with Tom Brown here, to help him out of the scrape, for I knew that that cowardly scoundrel called Tankerville would only get him in farther and farther. But we didn't come all the way in a gig, though, for the horse got rusty, and backed by a chalk pit on the road, and Tom and I had just time to get out before the devil went over, gig and all, and there they lie now, if the knackers havn't got hold of them."

"And pray what did you do after you came to Mr. Latimer?" asked Dr. Western. "This was on Saturday night, I think."

"Yes, sir," answered Williams; "Saturday night, hard upon twelve. Why, when I got to Mr. Latimer's, I found him in a great fright from the message I had sent him over, and expecting to have the magistrates upon him every minute, and yet as he had promised to marry poor Lucy Edmonds on this morning—which he did, by the way, and I was present at the wedding, which wasn't like as if I had committed a robbery last night."

"Certainly not," said Dr. Western.

"Well, your reverence," continued Williams, "I told him the best plan was for him to come away with me and Brown at once, and to have Mr. Morton let out the next morning, and then, perhaps, there would be no more said about it; and I told him I would show him where he could stay over Sunday, and he could come back early on Monday morning and marry Lucy, and be off again. But I didn't take him down Mallington way, you may be sure, when I wanted to get him out of your way, sir. We went t'other side, quite away towards London, and stayed all night at the Wheatsheaf, not far this side of St. Albans. Then this morning we came back again. We set off about four o'clock, and walked along till just about day break, or thereabouts; we stopped at the Chequers, a mile or so upon the road, and had a

glass of ale each. You can send and ask the landlord—I don't know what his name is. Well, then, there's another thing I remember, which will show that I am telling truth. Just coming into the town from the London side, there's a hosier's shop, and the man of the shop was opening it with his boy as we came by, and we stopped for a minute to ask him what was the best inn for us to go to, because Mr. Latimer didn't choose to go home, for fear of being caught about Mr. Morton's business, and I am sure the hosier will remember seeing us, for he looked at us devilish hard."

"We will send for these two men—the landlord of the Chequers, and Mr. Gimp, the hosier," answered Mr. Muzzlewell; and then he added, with a warning shake of the head, "Higginthorp, Higginthorp! you have been too sharp again, I fancy."

But at the same time Mr. Quatterly took out his watch, and observing to Dr. Western that it was quite time they should be gone, turned round to hold a short conversation with the magistrates in regard to what was to be done.

"If I may be permitted to suggest, gentlemen, as I term it," said Mr. Quatterly, "the best plan for you to follow is to take all the evidence you can get here, and then to remand the prisoners till to-morrow for further information. The man tells his story well; but there's something—something—something that I don't like;" and he shook his head sagaciously at each something very auspiciously. "However, as Dr. Western and I are going direct to Mallington, we can, within six hours at the farthest, send you information whether Mallington Hall has really been robbed or not; and it will be no great harm to remand the two worthy gentlemen till to-morrow morning."

Thus speaking, Mr. Quatterly, accompanied by Dr. Western, withdrew, the magistrates promising to follow all his suggestions.

Oh, promises, promises! piecrust is adamant to you, and puff-paste is not more fragile. Soon after Mr. Quatterly and Dr. Western had rolled out of the town, the landlord of the Chequers, Mr. Gimp, the hosier, and young John Blackmore himself were brought down to the magistrates' room. The first two fully corroborated Williams's statement, and the third, on being confronted with the prisoners, was seized with a violent fit of trembling, and on Williams demanding in a stern tone, "What the devil he meant by telling such lies of him," John Blackmore burst into tears like a great baby, declared that he had thought it was the intention of Mr. Higginthorp to starve him to death, and that he had made the deposition for the sake of a roll and a basin of cocoa.

In vain Mr. Higginthorp vowed and protested that he had used no inducements. He was too well known as a sharp practitioner for his word to be fully believed, and the magistrates, forgetting their promise to Mr. Quatterly, and thinking the case quite clear, ordered Williams and Brown immediately to be set at liberty, and young John Blackmore to be set in the stocks, an implement which was still in use at that time

CHAPTER LXXVI.

"KNOWLEDGE is power," said Lord Bacon; and many have said so since; but never was there propounded by human tongue an axiom more calculated to mislead. Adam and Eve found it so when first the tempter tried the same argument with them, and they believed him; every one of their children have found it so since; and Bacon himself, before he had done, discovered the fallacy when he saw weaker and less instructed minds triumph over one of the greatest that ever was possessed by man. Even could the mortal creature rob the Almighty Creator of one of his attributes, would that imply that he could rob him of all, and that power to use it would be commensurate with the knowledge obtained! Even in its ordinary application to the matters of this earth the dictum breaks down under us, whichever way we turn it. History, reason, experience, all show us its inapplicability; and that, let man's knowledge be what it may, there is ever an overruling principle, in action, which limits its operation within a prescribed range, and, as if to reprove the pride of science, snatches from it the rod of power at the moment least expected. History—*and history, the saddest of all things—shows us, alas! that none have possessed less real power over the minds of their contemporaries than those who were most in advance, in point of knowledge, of the age in which they lived; and the rack, and the scourge, and the dungeon walls, bear evidence how little power there is in knowledge against the force of circumstances.*

The knowledge that we possess, too, is *always* so small in amount, so deficient in one *point* or another, that but too often it leads us to act in the worst possible direction. If our minds possess the faculty of separating the important from the unimportant in any question that is before us, of sifting the corn from the chaff, the gold from the sand, and taking out the true from amidst the false, how seldom is it that we obtain the whole that is true! In other words, how seldom is it that everything which affects the question is before us. It is still a broken chain, dear reader, and imagination supplies the missing links with packthread.

Dr. Western told his story truly and fully; but he could tell no more than he knew, and the magistrates naturally concluded that, as he himself believed, Jack Williams and Thomas Brown were safely lodged in custody in the little town of —. Where were they by the time that Dr. Western had finished his statement! That you shall hear by and by. The personage, however, against whom the strongest motives for suspicion existed was evidently at liberty, and probably afar, and it was proposed that he should be immediately pursued. Neither Mr. Quatterly, however, nor the worthy rector had heard the directions given to the post-boy who drove Alfred Latimer and his poor bride; it was necessary, therefore, to despatch information to the magistrates of — of all that had been discovered at Mallington; and it was proposed to mount Harry Soames on horseback and send him off at once. But the constable was growing hungry, and, stepping forward, he observed that Bill Maltby was

already in custody; that he certainly knew something of the affair, and as he did not think that he was a principal, it was very probable he would give valuable information if rightly questioned. A nice piece of toasted cheese in a mousetrap never proved more tempting to one of the sleek long-tailed denizens of the skirting-board than did this suggestion to Mr. Middleton. He declared that they ought not to send over incomplete information when they had the means of rendering it perfect, and though Mr. Quatterly urged that delays were dangerous, and hinted that there was never any knowing what country magistrates might do, having a shrewd suspicion that worthy Mr. Muzzlewell would mismanage the affair, yet Mr. Middleton persisted in his desire to examine Bill Maltby, and Sir Simon Upplestone, ever bearing in mind that the foxhounds would meet the next morning, determined to seize the precious moment to insure that the following day was not wasted on magisterial business when so much more important avocations were before him in the field. Mr. Quatterly rubbed his hands, chuckled, and looked at his friend Morton with a sly glance, whispering

"Bye, baby hunting,
Daddy's gone a hunting."

But, notwithstanding jest or remonstrance, Harry Soames was sent to bring Bill Maltby before the magistrates, who amused themselves during the twenty minutes he was gone by discussing the whole particulars of the affair to very little purpose; while Dr. Western, sometimes meditative over the fearful events that had occurred, tracing in the wild demeanor which he had remarked in Alfred Latimer the consciousness of his crime, and sometimes conversing with Morton in a low voice, occasionally smiling faintly and sadly as any of the absurdities which had mingled with the horrors awakened in him that *sense* of the ridiculous which had originally been strong within him.

At the end of the time I have mentioned, Maltby was brought into the room, handcuffed, pale in the face, and bearing craven in every line and feature. Harry Soames had taken care to frighten him well as he came, eager, for his own credit's sake, to drive him to confession. In the tenderest and most friendly manner he had insinuated everything that was likely to create fear. He had talked of hanging, had expatiated upon gallowses; he had spoken a whole essay upon ropes. Judges, juries, counsel, the black cap, the condemned sermon, the pinioning for execution, were all passed in review; and, as they walked along, he ended by giving a full, true, and particular account of the last trial and execution he had seen, adding, that one of the three fellows whom he had then seen kicking in a noose for nearly an hour, might have saved himself that unpleasant sort of dance if he had been wise enough to turn king's evidence at once. He wanted to do so afterwards, the constable said, but it was then too late, and they did without him. The evidence was not very complete, indeed, but luckily they had got a hanging judge and a hanging jury, who went lightly over any little flaws, and condemned the fellows notwithstanding.

Thus prepared, Maltby appeared before the magistrates with his heart in the soles of his

feet, and Mr. Middleton immediately commenced the examination in the usual style, "Pray, Mr. Maltby," he said, "give an account of yourself from half-past eleven o'clock last night till one o'clock this morning!"

Bill Maltby was silent, not from anything like obstinacy, but from the very opposite condition of mind—doubt and hesitation.

"Do you choose to answer, or do you not, sir?" demanded Mr. Middleton; and Dr. Western added, "The law does not require you, prisoner, to say anything that may criminate yourself. With this information, it is for you to judge whether you will speak or not."

"I'd speak willingly enough," answered Maltby, "if I were promised to be king's evidence."

"That cannot be promised by us," said Dr. Western, speaking before Mr. Middleton could put in his word. "It must depend upon the crown, and I can hold out no hope to you of such being the case, especially if, as your words seem to imply, you have been a principal in the horrible crime which last night disgraced the country. Doubtless, there will be sufficient evidence of all the facts without yours."

"No, no!" cried the young man eagerly; "I'm no principal—I had nothing to do with the robbery—I was never in the house, nor near the house; and sooner than be thought a principal, I'll tell the whole just as it happened."

"Remember," continued Mr. Middleton, something in the style of Mr. Higginthorpe, "we hold out no inducement, we make no promises."

"Well, it don't signify," answered Maltby; "I'll tell the whole truth, and perhaps it may be taken into consideration."

He did not keep his word, however, in respect to telling the whole truth, for cowardice is ever apt to take its basest course—that of lying—when opportunity offers; and Maltby, though he related every circumstance that could criminate Williams, Brown, and Alfred Latimer, suppressed or distorted all that could aggravate his own offence. To have heard him one would have believed that he was nearly as innocent and as simple as a sucking lamb, and that he had been made a complete tool of by Williams and the rest. But, unfortunately for him, nobody believed that part of his story. Mr. Quatterly took no part in the examination, but smiled once or twice at the coloring which the young man gave to his own share in the transaction, and observed to Morton, "If he don't mend his story it won't stand cross-examination. He'll trip, for a hundred guineas, at the first five questions. Cross-examination has this advantage; that, though I have seen many a very honest man tell a dozen lies in a minute without knowing it, simply from puzzle and confusion, yet I never saw a liar who was such a complete master of his trade as to stand against it for ten minutes."

As soon as the investigation was over, Mr. Middleton proposed to commit the prisoner, on his own showing as an accessory before the fact; but, at the suggestion of Mr. Skinner, he was remanded till after the coroner's jury could be assembled.

The magistrates then adjourned, and Mr. Middleton, well contented with himself and with

the important part he had played, was quite placable and courteous to every one else, but more especially to Mr. Morton, who was rising vigorously in his good graces, upon the strength of being the proprietor of the Mallington Park estate.

Although Morton's mind was not of a character to bear rancor, and although he held Mr. Middleton too lightly to retain any lengthened indignation for his conduct, yet the contempt that he felt for that worthy person was an effectual bar to anything like cordiality on his part. A stiff bow, a word or two of commonplace, was all that Mr. Middleton's civilities could extract from him; and it is a truth which even narrow and vulgar-minded men feel more or less, that when a gentleman and a man of sense answers you with commonplaces, he has a very low opinion of your mind or your character. Indeed, you may almost always judge of the estimation in which you are held by another from the conversation which he addresses to you.

Thus rebuffed, Mr. Middleton took his departure, mentally calling Morton a proud puppy, whereas before he had called him a low scamp. The witnesses were suffered to depart. Mr. Skinner bundled up his papers and withdrew, and Sir Simon Upplstone, advancing to Mr. Morton, frankly apologised for having entertained the suspicions that had been instilled into him, saying, with a laugh and a glance at Mr. Quatterly, "We poor country squires, sir, know no better, and are strongly inclined to suppose every Londoner a rogue."

Morton shook him by the hand, for he liked his folly better than the other's. "Don't think of it any more, Sir Simon," he said; "we shall be neighbors, and I trust good neighbors, too; so, according to the old saying, we will let bygones be bygones, and look upon each other differently for the future."

"Sue out a *venire de novo*, and try the cause again," said Mr. Quatterly; and Sir Simon, not quite understanding what he meant, took his leave and his departure.

Left in possession of the back drawing-room, Mr. Morton, Mr. Quatterly, and Dr. Western gave a few minutes' consideration to all that had occurred, and then proceeded into the next room in search of Louisa, whom they found weeping alone, and near the window. The worthy rector, well understanding a part at least of her feelings, comforted her to the best of his ability, and Louisa, though she could not forget the occasion of her sorrow, or recover altogether from the shock and horror which the events of that morning had produced, wiped away the tears from her eyes, and besought her venerable friend to go and endeavor to give consolation and support to Mrs. Charlton, saying, "She needs it much more than I do, my dear sir, and me she, of course, will not see. I went to her dressing-room just now, because I thought it right, but, as I expected, she refused to admit me."

"She's very wrong in many respects," replied Dr. Western; "but, perhaps, is only the more in need of comfort and advice from the fact of being torn by angry passions, as well as assailed by misfortune. I will go to her for a short time, my dear; but I must not forget

there is another who requires consolation as much, and deserves it more—I mean the poor widow."

Thus saying he retired, but returned in a few minutes, saying, "She will not see me, and, indeed, I think her mind seems almost deranged by these terrible events, for she sent out word by her maid, that we were all in a conspiracy against her, and that the sooner we were out of the house the better. You, my dear young friend," he continued, turning to Morton, "cannot, of course, remain here, and you had better come down to my homely dwelling and remain there till your affairs are settled."

But Morton shook his head. "I think, my dear sir," he replied, "that had better not be. I have watched Mrs. Charlton narrowly for some time, and do not think I do her injustice when I express a belief that she will speedily render a residence in the same house with herself impossible to this dear girl. Though this house is Louisa's own, yet I know her too well to say that she will say one word to cause her step-mother to quit it. Under these circumstances it will be as well that she should have a place of refuge always at hand, and I see none to which she could possibly fly with propriety but to your roof, till such time as our marriage can take place, and therefore it will be better for me to take up my lodging as before at the inn."

"Always just and thoughtful," answered the clergyman; "and if Louisa thinks it right to come with me at once, I will go home with her before I proceed to the park."

"No," answered Louisa Charlton, with her bright eyes flashing. "I will endure as much as I can first. It shall not be my fault if I do not remain to comfort and to soothe her."

"Good, dear girl," said Dr. Western, pressing her hand in his, "do your duty always, my love. It will have its reward. I shall come up, however, in the evening to see; and I suppose, my dear sir, you and I will meet in the course of the afternoon."

"Undoubtedly," answered Morton.

Mr. Quatterly taking his departure with the worthy rector, the lovers were left alone for a few minutes. Had anything been needed to draw the hearts of Louisa Charlton and of Morton closer together, it would have been found in the conversation which followed, sorrowful and painful as it was; for though passion may rive up in the midst of gay and happy scenes, love that is watered by tears is generally the strongest and the finest plant. But they were not permitted to enjoy for any length of time even the happiness of being alone together.

Scarcely had the clergyman and the solicitor been gone ten minutes when Mrs. Charlton's maid entered, and, with a short courtesy to Morton, said, "I have a message from my mistress, sir, which I must deliver, though it isn't a very pleasant one. She says, that considering all things, and the state of the house, she thinks it very improper you should be here, and begs you would not trouble yourself to stay any longer."

A slight cloud came over Morton's brow; but he repressed every angry feeling, and replied, "Give my compliments to Mrs. Charlton, and tell her that, imagining that my society

would not be pleasant to her at the present moment, I was prepared to depart when her message came, which I wish she had spared herself the pain of sending, and me of receiving."

"Very well, sir," replied the woman, in almost a saucy tone; but she still lingered in the room, till Louisa, turning round, with a look of surprise, said, "You may go."

"My mistress said, ma'am," replied the woman—but Miss Charlton stopped her, saying, "Understand, Margaret, that in some things, at least, I am mistress of this house, and I tell you to go."

Her tone was perfectly calm, but firm; and the maid did not venture to disobey, but carried back to Mrs. Charlton the information that Miss Louisa had turned her out of the room, saying she was mistress of the house, and would not have her stay.

Mrs. Charlton started up from off the couch on which she was lying, with rage in every feature, exclaiming, "Mistress of the house, is she! Well, that may be, but she shall find that I am mistress of her and her fate;" and she took two or three steps towards the door. Thought came in the midst of passion, however, and she paused. She recollected what might be the consequences if, as she at first intended, she instantly came to a rupture with Louisa, and quitted Mallington House. Visions of importunate creditors came before her—of privation, discomfort, and annoyance, and, turning back to the sofa again, she put her handkerchief to her eyes, saying, "It is not worth while to grieve myself more than I am grieved already."

"I dare say he will not be long before he goes, ma'am," observed the maid.

"See, and let me know when he does," replied Mrs. Charlton; and in two or three minutes the woman returned with the welcome tidings that Mr. Morton was gone. The worthy lady immediately rose again, and proceeded to the drawing-room, with the full determination of tormenting her step-daughter to the utmost of her ability, and it was great. She resolved, indeed, to put a certain degree of restraint upon herself, in order not to raise the spirit of resistance; but to say everything that was cutting and unkind, to point every insinuation and innuendo in the calmest and meekest manner, to assume the airs of the injured and the patient, but to lose no opportunity of stinging where she dared not bite, and to utter words and imply suspicions which she fancied would poison Louisa's rest for many a day to come. She was met, however, in a different way from that which she expected. Judging from herself, she had supposed she would be able to irritate the poor girl into saying something that would put her in the wrong. But with Louisa pity triumphed over every other feeling, and she met everything with gentleness and calmness, which for long placed Mrs. Charlton at fault; it was done without effect, too, for it sprang from the real feelings of her heart. She could not be angry with one whom she supposed to be suffering so deeply, and at every unkind word that her step-mother addressed to her, she did not think, as some might have done, "Well, I will bear it; it cannot last long," but rather said, "No wonder she is irritable, with

such terrible suspicions hanging over the head of her unhappy son." She strove, as she had said she would, to soothe and console her whenever any opportunity offered; but Mrs. Charlton repelled all show of kindness with taunts and bitter scorn, and thus passed by several hours, during which she only made herself more wretched, without ruffling Miss Charlton's temper. The good lady, however, had somewhat over-calculated her powers of self-control. Had she succeeded in provoking Louisa to one rash word or angry expression, she would have remained weak and enduring as a saint, for she would have been so far gratified. But her step-daughter's patience and mildness irritated her every instant more and more, and at length, losing all self-command, she gave way to a vehement burst of passion, in which she poured forth accusations, and even insults, in a tone that alarmed her fair hearer for her intellect.

For the first time since Morton's departure Louisa wept, and in the midst of her tears, and while Mrs. Charlton was still giving vent to the torrent of her rage, the door was thrown open, and Dr. Western announced. He was close behind the servant, and had the excellent lady full in sight before she was aware of it. He heard the fierce and bitter words she uttered, he saw the angry hatred and defiance of her looks and gestures, and he soon made up his mind as to what was to be done.

For her part, Mrs. Charlton speedily saw that she had been caught in the fact, and that it would not do suddenly to change her voice and manner the moment that Dr. Western entered.

She, therefore, went on in the same strain, but even more violently than before, saying, "Base unworthy girl! Is it not enough that by a foul conspiracy you have attempted to take away my son's life, and now you treat me with contumely and contempt, almost giving me orders to quit your house, which, if your father's directions had been followed by those who drew up his will, would have been mine, not your's."

"I said nothing of the kind," replied Louisa, endeavoring to wipe away her tears, "and can assure you that no such thought ever entered into my mind. I only insisted upon a servant leaving the room who thought fit to intrude upon me after I told her to go, and that was hours ago."

"Oh, I dare say you will make your story good," exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, seeing her turn her eyes to Dr. Western. "The heiress has plenty of partisans, no doubt; but I must say that I wonder that I am subjected to intrusion now, when I have expressed my wish for peace and thought on such a terrible day as this."

"My dear madam," said Dr. Western, "I did not intend to intrude upon you. My visit was to Miss Charlton, and I must say I am glad that I came up this moment, as you do not seem to be enjoying the peace you mention, and I think if you will listen to me for a few moments, I can show you where peace is only to be found."

"If I do not obtain it it is all her fault," replied Mrs. Charlton. "She has been the bane of my existence—a serpent in my path; I do not wish to listen, Dr. Western, I have no desire to be preached to, and when I want your ghostly advice or consolation I will ask for it;

and as your visit is to the heiress, I shall leave my drawing-room to your disposal."

"That is quite unnecessary," replied the clergyman. "This dear girl and I will have plenty of opportunity of conversing in another place. Louisa, my dear, you must come with me to the rectory till Mrs. Charlton's mind is somewhat more composed. You can send up to your maid for anything that you want, and as my carriage is at the door, you had better get your bonnet and come at once."

This was a blow that Mrs. Charlton had not expected. It did not at all suit her plans and purposes, and, instantly altering her tone, she exclaimed, "What, then, I am to be deprived of all society and comfort!"

Dr. Western was provoked. "Madam," he said, "I can be depriving you of nothing that you can wish to retain, when I take one whom you have pronounced the only bane of your peace, and the serpent in your path;" but the next instant his heart smote him for what he had said, and, though he was resolved to execute his purpose, and firmly repeated his request to Louisa to get ready to accompany him, he added to Mrs. Charlton, as soon as she was gone, "I think, my dear madam, that Miss Charlton's absence for a few days, till you have recovered your usual command of yourself, is absolutely necessary to the preservation of those feelings between you which I hope may soon be restored, and never again interrupted."

"Oh, very well, sir—very well!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, rising. "I see it all—I understand it all! The scheme is plain enough, but it shall not succeed; for, thank God! I have power to stop it—and power which I will use, too. So don't let her triumph too soon, pray;" and thus saying, she turned and left the room without waiting for a reply.

When Louisa, on her return, found Dr. Western alone, she looked anxiously round the room, inquiring, "Will she not see me before I go?"

"My dear, it is better not," replied the rector; "an ill-regulated mind, in a high state of irritation, is apt to say things that are not easily forgotten. She will think better of all this by and by!" and, taking her hand, he led her to the carriage.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

We must give a very brief space—a very brief space indeed—to our worthy friend Mr. Gibbs, who has, perhaps, been treated unfairly in this our history. He has never had that space allotted to him which his merits deserve; and not half that space, if to his own merits are added those of his fragrant Balm of Trinidad. Now, however, Mr. Gibbs has an active part to perform, and we may say little or nothing of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, though to its virtues are, perhaps, to be attributed that he did take that part; at all events, it was the moving cause which brought his latent powers into operation. On the very morning of which we have been lately giving some account, the post brought Mr. Gibbs a letter from the proprietor of the Fragrant Balm and other equally admirable

articles, which somewhat alarmed the respectable traveler; for therein grave and serious remonstrances were addressed to him in regard to the small results which for the last two months had accrued from his exertions, and the little return derived from the expenses of his tour. A hint was also conveyed to him that his services would be dispensed with unless a different position of affairs was presented by the accounts of the next month; and as his heart was wrapped up in the Fragrant Balm, and he felt that his honor and reputation were concerned in its success, Mr. Gibbs had just determined to walk over to Sturton, where he had some time before commenced a negotiation with a perfumer, and endeavor to do, what is, I believe, technically called, "make a deal," when he was called as a witness before the magistrates. The length of time that he was kept at Mallington House threw him into despair; and as soon as he was free to act as he pleased, he got off down the hill like a shot, entered the inn, provided himself with a certain number of bottles and his note-book, and informed worthy Mrs. Pluckrose that he was going over to the neighboring town, and might stay all night.

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Pluckrose. "that is unlucky, I do declare, Mr. Gibbs; for since you went out old Stapleton, the rich old wig-maker at Barbourne, has been here, and I talked to him of your stuff ('Stuff!' said Mr. Gibbs), and showed him what it had done for my hair; and he said he had a great mind to take a score, if he could get a good per-centage, and he's to be back about it to-night."

Mr. Gibbs instantly promised in the most solemn manner to be back to meet old Stapleton, and off he set for Sturton at a swinging pace.

It was a good long distance, as the reader well knows; and although Mr. Gibbs walked as fast as he could go, and he was a light and active man, who usually went at the rate of a postman, it took him a few minutes more than two hours to reach the market-place at Sturton. When he did reach it, however, which was about five o'clock in the afternoon, he found every reason to be satisfied with his expedition. The bottle of the Fragrant Balm which he had left was approved of; it had adorned the head of the mayor's wife; it had beautified the locks of the aldermen's children! After a little haggling about price, fifty bottles were disposed of to the chief perfumer in the place, and Mr. Gibbs, saying to himself "This will bring me up with a wipe," retired to a snug little public-house to get himself some bread and cheese and ale, before he set out on his return to Mallington. The traffic, the bread and cheese, and ale, took him altogether about one hour and five-and-twenty minutes, so that it was about half-past six o'clock when the worthy traveler set out upon his return towards Mallington.

I trust that I have combined precision with brevity in this account of Mr. Gibbs's proceedings, for it is necessary that the reader should know the particulars, but not necessary that he should pause upon them. Now, to any one who considers how far the year was advanced it will be apparent that Mr. Gibbs could not get half way back to Mallington before night began to fall, and the same fact was apparent to Mr.

Gibbs also before he set out; but what cared Mr. Gibbs! He had made a successful speculation; he had wiped away a reproach upon his commercial abilities; his heart was light, the evening was fair, and he had bread and cheese and ale on board! If he thought at all of having been knocked down in Wenlock Wood, he remembered at the same time that, by Dr. Western's showing, the knocker-down was far away from the knocker, in custody one-and-twenty miles off, and, therefore, away he went with a gay step—

"Harmless himself, expecting harm from none."

During the first two miles he met with a good number of people, all cheerful, bustling, busy, like himself. It seemed as if the radiance of Mr. Gibbs's countenance spread sunshine around him. But during the next two miles the population became thinner, a laborer or two was met trudging slowly homeward, one farmer passed on horseback, and that was all; the next mile of the road proved almost a solitude. The country became wilder, the sky grew somewhat gray, and Wenlock Wood was near at hand. Whether it was that the ale began to lose its effect, or that the spirits of Mr. Gibbs had exhausted themselves by their own activity, or whether it was that Mr. Gibbs was tired, or that the solemn aspect of the sky and the wood scene before his eyes oppressed his breast, certain it is that Mr. Gibbs's heart began to fail a little, a very little, at the sight of Wenlock Wood.

We have before said that Mr. Gibbs was a brave man; he by no means wanted courage, though subject, like many other men's courage, to a few little irregularities; but as soon as he found a sort of sinking about the precordial region, he called all his resolution to his aid, and began to mount the hill before him with a wide step and a somewhat more rapid pace than was necessary. By the time that he reached the top, where the hill formed a sort of angle, commanding a view on two sides over the country below, Mr. Gibbs found himself what in jockey language is called "blown," anglicé, out of breath, and pausing on the top to recover, he looked out over the low ground on either hand and the two slopes at the hill. He could see the road by which he himself had ascended, another small path on the left, at about a third of a mile's distance, and another road to the right, somewhat farther, all mounting with a winding course, like three great serpents, into Wenlock Wood; and the gray cool light of the evening, without any of the dazzling mistiness of the day, showed him, perhaps, their several courses more distinctly than if the sun had been above the horizon. He knew, from his former perquisitions in the wood, in company with Mr. Harry Soames, constable of Mallington, that the path to the left wound up to the very spot where he had been knocked down; and in the state of his feelings at that moment, it was by no means satisfactory to him to perceive two persons issue forth from amongst the bushes about half way down, and beginning to climb the hill. Mr. Gibbs, at one glance, saw that the foremost of these men was a short, stout personage, whom either fancy or the clearness of his visual organs made him think very like the celebrated Jack Williams; while

the one that followed was a taller and heavier personage, who might very well be Mr. Thomas Brown.

All this was seen in a moment, as I have said, for as soon as he had seen it, Mr. Gibbs ducked down to prevent his own person from attracting observation, and hurried along with the utmost rapidity, calculating that he should get past the place where the two paths met before the others could reach it.

There is an old proverb to the effect that the more haste is the worst speed, and so Mr. Gibbs found it on the present occasion. He made some way, indeed, without any sinister accident; but when he had gone about half a mile, and was in the midst of the thickest part of the wood, grim night had begun to be unpleasantly troublesome. Certain importunate brambles which we have spoken of before, began to tug at his shins as he passed, and solicit him urgently rather to remain where he was; the stump of a tree objected strongly to his passing; and at the same time Mr. Gibbs was very well aware that the path on which he had seen the other two men, came along at an acute angle with the one he was himself pursuing, so that if they had gone on at anything like a moderate rate of progression, they would not be further from him than a hundred yards or so. He fancied he heard voices too, and that put him in a portentous fright. The epithet may seem not well chosen, but still it is selected with care. The evil which his fright portended, was a tremendous fall over the gnarled root of an old oak, just about five yards from the spot where he had before fallen from an application of a crab stick to the other extreme of his person.

Mr. Gibbs broke his shin. The consequence was that immediately upon rising, he hopped for a minute and a half on one foot in the temporary insanity of acute pain. He was brought to his senses the moment after, however, by distinctly hearing a voice, and an excessively unpleasant voice it was to his ears, for he had heard it more than once before.

What could he do! What was to become of him! He was lame, lonely, benighted, and within thirty yards upon the best possible computation of a couple of murderers flying from justice.

Mr. Gibbs had been famous for bird's nesting in his youth. He had practised some of the inferior means and appliances of the same art in Mallington Park, amongst the beech trees. A beech tree is more difficult to climb than an oak, the one which had overthrown him was close at hand, and Mr. Gibbs resolved to make a friend of an enemy, and get into the tree. There was neither sin nor shame in it; King Charles had done the same before him; he was less likely to be followed, and more able to defend himself there than on the open path; and consequently up he went, finding the various knobs and protuberances of the old oak's rugged rind almost as good as a flight of stairs, and a great deal better than a ladder. And now having placed him in a very interesting situation, we shall leave the reader to contemplate him as he sits about twelve feet from the ground, where the principal stem of the oak divided into great branches. A man may have a more uncomfortable seat than on an oak tree, if there be not a pack of wolves at the foot.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

We left Mr. Gibbs in an oak tree, and in no very pleasant state of mind. We have much compassion for him; we have a yearning to return to him, one of our early love—to get him out of his oak tree if possible—to lend him a friendly hand, and aid him to descend lightly to the ground. The reader, too, would fain watch him as he sits, and learn what became of him—would contemplate him in the crisis of his fate, and prepare to shed tears over his tragic end, in the hand of those wolves in sheep's-clothing (an exquisite figure of speech, which may well be applied to any bad man who wears a woollen jacket), or to smile with a rejoicing heart if he contrives to escape them. The critic, too—the lenient, mild, benignant critic—lies in wait beside us, ready, in the true style of our witty friend Poulie's "slashing article," to condemn any course that we may pursue, and declare that there is a great deal too much, or a great deal too little of Mr. Gibbs in the book—just as we speak of him or let him alone. But after due deliberation, and a considerable waste of thought, we have determined, not without some hesitation, and a good deal of alarm, from manifold motives, and for various reasons thereunto us moving, which we will not detain the reader any longer to explain—to leave Mr. Gibbs in the oak tree!

There he is, reader! Let him make the best of it. It is his own fault: he had no business to get into the oak tree if he was in such a hurry to get out of it. What business have men to complain of a union workhouse! If it is so terrible a place, why do they go in! It is true they may starve if they stay out, and many prefer it; but, nevertheless, merciful legislators give them a choice—starvation or imprisonment! What unreasonable men to grumble! Thus, Mr. Gibbs fancied that he would have his throat cut if he stayed down below, and therefore got up into the tree. Yet it was his own fault if he felt uncomfortable there, for he might have remained where he was at first, and all the miseries of life would soon have been over. So he had nobody to thank for it but himself. The two cases are exactly parallel.

Neither will we follow Louisa Charlton to the rectory at present, nor pursue Alfred Latimer on his ill-omened bridal journey; nor sit with the Misses Martin to their dish of scandal; nor follow Mr. Henry Soames upon his pursuit of the criminals; but, by the reader's leave, that everything may be in order, we will walk along with Mr. Quatterly and Mr. Morton to the respectable inn called the Dagpipes, where they were received with every sort of joy and satisfaction by the blooming Mrs. Pluckrose.

It may be well supposed that the little town of Mallington had been in a state of excitement and consternation during the whole morning, and where they have neither a billiard-room, a reading-room, a club, or a coffee-house in a place, where can people go to compare notes, receive information, and manufacture rumors, so well as to the principal inn or public-house in the neighborhood! The bar, the commercial room, and the passage were filled with the inhabitants of Mallington and its vicinity, and round the door were collected a considerable

number of persons who had an objection to spending their money upon ale, wine, or brandy-and-water.

Through the midst of all these Mr. Morton passed with his friend, Mr. Quatterly, and they all turned round at him to stare at him as they went, for they were all aware by this time that he had been accused of robbery and murder, and whatever it was that they expected to see, they were certainly considerably surprised by his calm, placid, and self-possessed demeanor, as he walked on, unconscious of the attention he was attracting.

"Well, madam," said Mr. Quatterly, tapping the landlady familiarly on the shoulder; "Well, Mrs. Pluckrose"—and immediately alleviating, as was sometimes customary with him, into an abominable pun, he added, "though, indeed, my dear lady, I think your name ought to be put into the plural, for you must have plucked two roses to blush so brightly on either cheek. But to return. Has anybody been here this morning inquiring for me. If so, I hope you have kept him."

"Oh, yes, sir," replied Mrs. Pluckrose, dropping a courtesy, "there are two gentlemen waiting for you. I took the liberty of putting them into Mr. Morton's sitting-room, because the house is so full."

"Not so full as to prevent my having a bed in it, Mrs. Pluckrose?" said the worthy solicitor; but the landlady reassured him on that point, and Mr. Morton and his friend walked up stairs, where they found waiting a middle-aged gentleman, who looked very much like a solicitor, and a younger man, bearing a strong resemblance to a clerk. There was a great blue bag upon the table before them, and the solicitor looked out of the window, while the clerk sat with his hands on his knees.

"Ah, Mr. Writham," said Mr. Quatterly, rolling into the room as fast as his small legs would carry him. "I hope I have not kept you waiting, for we had a little magisterial business to go through here. Indeed, I did not expect to see you yourself. A clerk would have done."

"Oh, nothing like one's own presence, my dear sir," answered Mr. Writham, who had a peculiarly clear, sharp, ferret-like expression of countenance, with a long sharp nose, the very look of which would have made a flaw in a piece of parchment. "I came down to say that the whole matter may be considered as definitely settled and agreed upon the basis laid down between us at our last conference—always provided, nevertheless—"

"Anything hereinbefore contained to the contrary notwithstanding," said Mr. Quatterly, laughing. "I thought there was an exceptionable clause, friend Writham. Well, what is it—what is it? Out with it, man. We'll soon deal with it."

"It is simply this, my dear sir," answered Mr. Writham, "and you will own that it's quite reasonable, namely, that your client—I presume that I have the honor of being in his presence—do produce lawful and sufficient proof of the marriage of Henry Morton Wilmot and Maria dei Pazzi, and also of the death without issue of Charles Francis Wilmot."

"Oh, the latter is easily proved," replied Mr. Quatterly, "and, besides with that you have

nothing to do, for if he did leave legitimate issue, it would bar your client as well as mine, and besides, I never heard of a boy seven years old having a son and heir. The law does not contemplate such a case, Mr. Writham, and we can prove his birth and his death, with an interval of seven years between them. As to the other matter, it is quite right that you should have the proof you require, and you shall have it. There may be a little delay, from an awkward event which has removed the certificate to some distance."

Mr. Writham pricked up his ears, for there seemed to him a chance of pleading still, and he observed in a solemn tone, "Of course, Mr. Quatterly, proof is necessary. Full, legal indubitable proof." a

"And proof you shall have, my dear Writham," answered Mr. Quatterly—"full, legal, indubitable proof, as you say, for where we got the one certificate we can easily get another, even if the first should be lost. But by your good leave, my friend, we will draw up a little memorandum of the grounds on which we stand, stating the proofs and particulars that you require, and guarding against any future demands." Mr. Writham seemed to pause and hesitate; but Mr. Quatterly went on in a decided tone, saying, "It is absolutely necessary, Writham. It must be done, my friend. Either sign and get your costs, or don't sign and go without them. I'm a solicitor, too, you know, Writham, and one time I had a window broken in my house—a glazier was sent for, who put in the pane. Just when he had done I unfortunately walked into the room, and saw him neatly staring the next pane with his diamond, then placing his finger dexterously against it till it gave a crack. I thought to myself, 'What an image of a solicitor!' We are all fond of making little holes, that we may mend them afterwards. It's the very nature and essence of our profession, Writham," and he took his fellow practitioner by the arm and gave him a friendly shake.

Mr. Writham did not attempt to resist his eloquence. The paper was drawn up by Mr. Quatterly's own hands; Mr. Writham suggested some alterations; they were canvassed, discussed, investigated in their tendencies, and some were rejected, whilst others were admitted; after which the paper was signed. Mr. Morton took no part in the affair; but amused himself quietly by writing a letter, which occupied the greater portion of the time. When the whole business was concluded, Mr. Quatterly began to feel the inconvenience of his brother solicitor having been shown into that room. He was naturally of a hospitable and jovial disposition, and he would have liked very well to have asked Mr. Writham to dine with him at Mallington; but then he wanted a little private conversation with Morton, and was well aware that Morton might desire a little private conversation with somebody else. Mr. Writham, however, relieved him from his difficulty by declaring that he must be off to London as fast as possible, as he had at least a hundred and fifty pieces of business to transact on the following day. As no coach passed towards town after that hour, his only resource lay in post-chaises; and accordingly, as soon

as one could be procured, away he went, taking his clerk and his blue bag along with him.

As soon as he was gone, Mr. Quatterly entered upon business with his friend. "This certificate must be procured somehow, my dear sir," he said. "It may be difficult and unpleasant to wait for jourr 'to and from Italy; and yet how are we to get it without sending, I do not perceive. You look mighty cool and indifferent; but I can tell you it is a serious matter; for the want of this document, if the exhibition thereof be long delayed, may encourage these people to plead; and then Lord have mercy on your purse!—for it will be a fight with them for life or death—or for costs or no costs, which comes to the same thing."

"I am not at all indifferent, my good friend, I assure you," answered Morton; "but nevertheless, I feel very sure that we shall obtain the paper speedily. I know it to be in the hands of the fellow Williams, with all the other papers that were in my pocket-book. Most likely he has not had time to destroy them before he was apprehended, as you have stated, for the only thing he could gain, would be by keeping them; and, therefore, doubtless, they will be found amongst the rest of the things which he may have thought fit to leave behind. I suppose we shall soon have over some intelligence from Mr. Soames, the constable, and you can send over directions to stop all that belongs to me."

"That shall be done—that shall be done!" answered Mr. Quatterly: "but still I can't help regretting that the paper is not forthcoming at once. I see risk and inconvenience, and a great deal of law; and no one who knows as much of the fresh eggs of Mrs. Themis can doubt that the sooner they are hatched the better; for if they are left alone for a single night, a thousand to one they are found addled the next morning."

"That is not a very consolatory view of the case," answered Morton; "but still I do not see, my excellent friend, how I can help myself. There is an old saying, which you of all men must be well acquainted with, that 'what is done cannot be undone.'"

"Oh yes, I love old sayings," answered the worthy solicitor, "some for being wonderfully good and true, and some for being wonderfully bad and false; though, probably, they were all true when they were first said, otherwise Solomon must have been a fool, and many a wiser man than he was much in the same case. Now, for instance, men say that honesty is the best policy; and it would be true of all times, if they had added the words 'here or hereafter;' but as the proverb stands, upon my life, I believe there is nothing more false. An honest man always makes much less noise in the world than a rogue; and as the only way to get on in life is to make a noise in the world, the rogue has the better chance. Look at poets, philosophers, statesmen, soldiers—you will always find that those who have done the most good have been the least rewarded. Write lascivious verses and immoral odes, and your contemporaries crown you with immortality—the public purchase, and the minister honors. Inculcate virtue, try to amend and correct, and starve in a garret, or die in a madhouse. Set up for infidel, and you're raised above Locke and New-

ton. Be a true Christian philosopher, and you are passed by as a twaddling canter. So with statesmen, so with soldiers, so even with lawyers. A rogue has a thousand paths he may follow to distinction, an honest man but one. Rogues for ever, friend Morton! But I'm getting misanthropical and you fidgety; so tell me what you are going to do, noble sir, and I'll be no clog upon you."

"First, my dear sir," replied Morton, with a smile, given in passing to his friend's somewhat bitter, but not very unjust view of human life. "First, I am going over to Mallington Hall, in order to see something of the scene of such sad events, and to visit the poor widow of the murdered man; then I am going to return here, by your leave, to dine with you upon such fare as Mrs. Pluckrose can furnish; and then I shall go and drink tea with good Dr. Western and his sister."

"Where you expect to meet somebody else," said Mr. Quatterly. "Well, then, my young friend, my afternoon is laid out also. First, I will walk over with you to Mallington Hall, if you have no objection; then I will return here with you and dine; then I will amuse myself by writing a few letters, and making a few notes, till it is time to go to what the young people call Bedfordshire. Thus will you and I both consult our convenience: I shall not be in your way, and you will not be in mine. But pray order the dinner before you go, or else we shall have to wait for a full hour after we come back. Now, there is nothing so unpleasant on earth as waiting for an inn dinner."

Morton praised the punctuality of Mrs. Pluckrose, the greatest virtue of an innkeeper, but took his friend's advice, and after the dinner was ordered, they both set out upon their expedition, although the day had become cloudy as the sun crossed the sky. Mr. Quatterly admired the whole scene very much. With the park he was peculiarly pleased, and noticed all those little beauties which well directed art had added to nature, in a manner that would have delighted poor Edmonds, could he have heard his words.

"All that you so much praise, my dear sir," said Morton, "is owing to the exertions of one man, poor Edmonds, who lies murdered up at the house there. He was a fine specimen of that very fine creature the English peasant of the best class. Not without his peculiarities; he was, perhaps, rather elevated by them than otherwise, for they were all of a fine and generous kind. He was blunt and straightforward, but never rude or insolent, and resolute to do his duty to his master, whether his master liked it or not; he was sometimes a little pertinacious, especially where the object required labor and exertion on his own part. There was a certain degree of sternness about him, but yet he was not without kindly and gentle feelings; and, indeed, from all I have heard, I fear that his taking part with, and making excuses for, that wretched young man, Mrs. Charlton's son, when every one else avoided and condemned him, has been the means of bringing wretchedness to his home, and even death upon himself."

"A fine character, but a rare one in his class," said Mr. Quatterly.

"Nay, I do not think so," answered Morton.

"I believe that there are more of such characters in England than we imagine, and that there would be more still if various circumstances in our state of society did not tend in different ways to brutalise them. It is with the classes above themselves that a great part of the fault lies wherever we find a rude and animal class of peasantry. I speak not of one class alone, but of all the classes above them in their degree, for the great proprietor has his share in producing the evil, by the neglect of the means which God has put in his power for the purpose of removing it. But take two classes as examples—the farmer and the manufacturer. There are many individual exceptions, but in general they only seem to look upon those who labor for them as machines, by means of which they are to produce as much as possible at the least possible expense. They have no object in making them taught but machines, and a human machine is nothing but a teachable beast. In the manufactory he may become a well-drilled monkey; in the fields he may be a bear; but no effort of any value is made to raise him, but, on the contrary, many to depress him in the scale of being. In some places we teach the people reading and writing, and so far we do well; but we rarely, if ever, address ourselves to teach them to think rightly, to reason justly, or to weigh moral against physical advantages; and all the time we show them by our own conduct that we use their exertions but for our own purposes, and, by paying not one penny more than we are obliged, keep them in that state of poverty and dependence which is the most brutalising of all things; or, what is worse, perhaps, and more dangerous to themselves and society, prove to them that in their communication with the classes above them, they receive nought but injury and wrong. Here, in this very case before us, a man in the rank and station of a gentleman is treated both respectfully and kindly by a person greatly inferior to himself in station, though greatly superior to him in mind; and what does he inflict in return, first upon the daughter, and then upon the father!"

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Quatterly, with surprise, "you do not mean to say that the poor girl I saw married this day to that young vagabond, Alfred Latimer, is the daughter of the murdered man?"

"Yes, indeed," answered Morton; "and I know not to be sorry or to rejoice that the marriage has really taken place."

"Oh, rejoice, rejoice at all events," answered Mr. Quatterly; "but, to say truth, this offers me the first reasonable cause for doubting the young man's guilt. Notwithstanding all my knowledge of human crime—and it is tolerably extensive, as I need not tell you—I can hardly believe it possible that a man, however depraved, should go and wed at the altar a woman with whose father's blood his hand was still wet. Truth, that most extraordinary thing, is the most difficult of all ores to extract from the immense mass of dross with which it is mingled, and in this case we may have got upon a wrong scent. Certainly the circumstances are very suspicious; but yet nothing is clearly proved. The young man may have been out upon some other wild expedition, the

blood may have come upon his clothes in some other way; God grant it, and grant that it may be proved, for although we get at as much truth as perhaps can possibly be obtained by the means and appliances of our criminal law, yet, depend upon it, many a man is hanged for crimes he has never committed."

Morton was silent, for he knew more of Alfred Latimer's character than good Mr. Quatterly did, and he did not entertain the same hopes as his friend. In a few minutes after they approached the great door of the house by the gravel walk in front, and the old gentleman, not feeling the same interest in all the actors of the sad scenes which had lately passed that Morton did, paused to comment upon the heavy and antique masses of the building, which had their picturesque beauty, notwithstanding some want of taste in the details. Morton walked silently on and rang the bell. The door was speedily opened, and Mrs. Chalke, the house-keeper, appeared behind the good woman who drew it back. "Ah, sir," said the house-keeper, as soon as she saw Mr. Morton; "this has been a terrible affair, and I'm very glad you are come, if you have anything to do with the place, for, indeed, I cannot stay in it to-night after what has happened. I should die of fright, I am sure, before morning broke; and, indeed, if we had not got in Betsey Smith and Mrs. Blackmore, I don't think I could stay in it by day."

Morton promised that he would send two or three men to remain upon the premises all night, and then proceeded with Mr. Quatterly to visit the immediate scenes of the plunderers' operations. He first turned his steps to the plate room, the door of which was still open, for the keys had always been kept in London, and then, after having given orders that it should be immediately fastened by a padlock, he proceeded to the chamber where the body of poor Edmunds still lay, awaiting the coroner's inquest. The presence of death is always sad and solemn. There are vague and dark prophecies in the look of the dead that appeal with a warning voice to the living, even when the last final act of man's life has come in the regular course of the great tragedy. But when an active and intelligent being has been brought to a close, in the midst of health and vigor, by some unnatural cause, and more especially by crime, that voice becomes more deep and strong, reasoning to the ear that will hear it, of all the duties and relations of life, and all the punishments which attend their neglect or violation. The punishments inevitable, innumerable, not alone those which the hand of man visibly inflicts, but those which the judgment of the Almighty prescribes even in this world—the withdrawal of his countenance and his grace, the extinction of good feelings and of higher hopes, the blotting out of all the traces of a better and a purer nature, which were left to his descendants by the first sinner at the fall. Mr. Morton and his friend gazed upon the body of the poor park-keeper, as he remained stretched upon the bed in the same position in which he had been placed on the preceding night. Neither of them said a word for some time, but both felt deeply, and Morton, when he turned away, repeated once or twice, "Poor fellow, poor fellow!"

"Now, my dear sir," he said, when they were once more in the hall; "I will go over to the widow's, and if she will receive me, I will see her, however painful a duty it may be. The man has been killed in my service, and I doubt not, from what I know of him, in doing it well. She and her children, therefore, must be provided for, and though, perhaps, she may not have turned her thoughts to the aggravation which poverty and worldly difficulties must always, sooner or later, bring to other sorrows, yet they would sooner or later present themselves to her mind, and it is as well that she should be spared that uneasiness altogether."

"You are right, my dear sir, you are right," replied Mr. Quatterly, following him; "one of the best charities is the sparing of our fellow-creatures any source of unhappiness from which we can shield them."

The door of the park-keeper's house was opened by the little boy, with his face pale and his eyes red. The room in which the family had usually sat was vacant, and the boy said that his mother was lying down on her bed, and that Dr. Western had just left her.

"Tell her, my good boy," said Morton, "that I am here, and that I should like to speak to her for a few minutes, if she can admit me; but that if she is not well enough I will come and see her to-morrow."

The boy returned from the little room, beyond, however, asking Mr. Morton to go in; and, leaving Mr. Quatterly in the other chamber, he passed through the door, and found poor Mrs. Edmonds seated upon the side of the bed, with the windows half closed. Her grief was very silent; there was no display, no effort, no noisy sorrow. She made more than one ineffectual attempt to restrain her tears, but she felt that she could not speak, lest the bitterness of her heart should burst forth in lamentations.

Morton took her hand kindly; and, seating himself on a chair beside her, he said, in a quiet low tone, "I am sorry to intrude upon you now, Mrs. Edmonds, especially as I know that such grief as yours is not to be comforted; but I thought I might as well spare you any unnecessary cares or anxieties by assuring you that your own fate, and that of your children, shall be well cared for. I will take the boy's education upon myself, and will provide for him hereafter. You, also, I will take care shall never know want of any kind, and in whatever occupation may suit you best—for I know that you will not like to be without occupation—you shall have every assistance that I can give you."

"Thank you, sir, thank you," answered Mrs. Edmonds; "you are very kind—but, oh, my poor girl!" and she burst into tears again.

"Well, perhaps, what I have to tell you of her may comfort you, on her score, at least," answered Morton. "I have ascertained, Mrs. Edmonds, that she is really lawfully married to him." He did not venture to mention the name; and he did hope and trust that, for some time, at least, the share which Alfred Latimer was suspected of having taken in the death of her husband would be kept from Mrs. Edmonds's ear.

"Oh! thank you, sir," replied the widow; "that is comfort, indeed. I did not dare to mention her name to Dr. Western, for I knew he thought her very wicked, though he never said

so. Oh, that her poor father could have heard such news!" and the tears burst forth afresh.

After a few more words of kindness, which is always consolation in its degree, Morton left the widow, and returned with Mr. Quatterly to the inn.

We will not pause to discuss the dinner which Mrs. Pluckrose set before her revered guests, nor descend upon the excellence of the roast chickens, nor the insufferable hardness of the bacon by which they were accompanied. After the moderate meal was over, Morton left his companion for the evening, and once more took his way along the bank of the river from the inn to the rectory.

There are days in the life of every one when events seem to crowd so thickly together that they jostle one another for attention, and a thousand subjects of deep interest were pressing upon our young friend's mind at that moment; but yet a faint hope of seeing fair Louisa Charlton at the rector's passed through the crowd, and made him hurry his steps. Nor was he deceived, for the first person he saw on entering was herself.

"I thought, dear Louisa," he said, "that you would be driven to this kind place of refuge. I hope you had not much to endure before you sought it."

"A great deal more than ought to have been inflicted upon her," replied Dr. Western, speaking for his fair ward. "But now, my dear sir, my sister and I will do our best to make her happy whilst she remains with us; but I fear there are still a good many difficulties and discomforts to be encountered before her fate is more happily fixed."

"Discomforts, perhaps many," replied Morton; "but difficulties, I trust, none, my dear doctor. Mrs. Charlton's opposition, I know, we must expect; but if Louisa feels as I hope she does, that opposition need cause no delay whatever in our arrangements. The law must afterwards take its course, and pronounce how far we may be affected by the lady's decision. But after a scene which I have to relate to you, and which took place this morning before you arrived, I think you will see that it is unnecessary for us to pay any attention to Mrs. Charlton's proceedings, as her opinion of me or any other person depends entirely upon our pliability in regard to certain views, which seem to me not of the most honest character. However, of that hereafter."

The conversation now turned to other subjects; but still the events of the day formed, of course, the principal topic, and as all those events were sad—as they all showed, in different points of view, the depravity or folly of human nature, the general tenor of that evening's conference was sad and somewhat gloomy. Yet Morton did not love Louisa less, and Louisa loved Morton, if possible, more, as that conversation came towards a close. The lighter things of life have their effect perhaps in first attracting, but it is when the deeper and the sterner draw forth the more profound and precious qualities that the heart becomes knit to heart by ties that can never be broken. It is then that the casket is thrown open, and the real jewels displayed, for the small traits and indications which are visible in ordinary society much more frequently

afford a view into the faults and failings than into the virtues and excellencies of our companions.

As the hour of ten was approaching, Morton related to Dr. Western his visit to the widow, and the short conversation which had taken place between them. "I must ask you, my dear sir," he said, "who know so much more of her habits and feelings than I do, to turn in your mind what sort of position will be best suited for her. I will secure to her a little independence; but I know that it will please her best, and I am sure that, under existing circumstances, it will be best for her, to have some employment for her leisure time. There are some occasions, as we all know, when labor is a blessing; and such, I believe, it will be in her case. The boy we will easily provide for; and as to poor Lucy, I fear we must wait to see the course of events before we can devise anything for her benefit."

"I dread to think," said Dr. Western, feelingly, "what must be the effect on Lucy's mind when she knows the whole of this sad history."

"Oh, keep it from her—keep it from her!" cried Louisa. "If it be possible, never let her know the worst of all that has occurred."

Dr. Western shook his head. "It is the saddest part of sin and crime, my love," he said, "that they bring misery to others who have no participation in them. One man's folly or wickedness often spreads round wretchedness to thousands, and almost each house in the land has, sooner or later, its heartaches from the errors of some one whom its roof has at some time sheltered. You, yourself, my dear child, will have to bear your share of suffering from Alfred Latimer's errors, and this poor girl who is now his wife must endure her part of the same hard consequences. I see no possibility of preventing it. She must know of his apprehension, which will doubtless be speedily effected, and all the circumstances will, sooner or later, be heard, whatever be the result."

"I think it might be prevented," said Morton, after a moment's thought. "His apprehension, indeed, she must learn; but it seems to me possible that by some one stepping forward to protect her in her unprotected state, the darkest fact of all—if it be a fact—that her husband was an actual participator in her father's murder, may be concealed from her. At all events, in the case of the poor widow, we had better keep our suspicions from reaching her ears as long as possible, for it would bitterly aggravate her grief at present were she to know all the circumstances as they now appear."

"You say if it be a fact, my dear sir," replied Dr. Western, "and you speak in a tone of doubt. Has anything occurred to make you hope that the opinions we formed this morning are groundless?"

"But little," answered Morton. "Mr. Quatterly, indeed, has doubts; but it seems to me—"

While he was speaking there was a good deal of bustle in the rector's hall; much more, indeed, than that usually quiet and well-regulated place was at all accustomed to. Voices sounded speaking low and eagerly, and the tones of Dr. Western's old butler, usually so

grave and calm, were at length heard rising powerfully.

"But I must and will see him this instant," cried one voice, which Morton thought he recognised.

"But I tell you you cannot see him till I let him know, and ask whether he chooses it or not."

"But I know he will choose, and see him I will this moment," rejoined the first speaker. "I tell you it's matter of life and death; and there's not a moment to be lost!"

There seemed to come then a little scuffle in the hall, in which the rector's butler, being the weakest, as usual, went to the wall, and the moment after, the door of the dining-room, which was adjacent, was thrown open, and then suddenly closed again. Another moment brought a step to the drawing-room door, and it too was opened with eager haste. All eyes were turned towards it, on the part of Louisa and Mrs. Evelyn with some degree of fear, and instantly it rushed Mr. Gibbs in his own proper person, his usually neat and somewhat extravagant attire being a good deal deranged, his black and silken ringlets all confused and tumbled over each other like a mob of corkscrews; but importance and vigor in his countenance.

"Oh, sir," he said, addressing Morton, as soon as he perceived him; "I have such news for you, though it has well nigh cost me my life—come along—there is not a moment to be lost—we've got them safe if you like to have them."

Mr. Gibbs' mind was evidently over-excited, and Morton, fearing that he might come harshly on some subject that would be painful to Louisa, beckoned him to come out of the room, saying, "I will speak to you in the library, Mr. Gibbs, by Dr. Western's permission."

"Let him come, too—let him come, too," cried Mr. Gibbs. "We shall want all the assistance we can get, I can tell you, sir; but there's not a moment to be lost if you intend to do anything effectual"—thus saying he followed Mr. Morton out of the room. Dr. Western accompanied him, and after they had been about ten minutes away together, the bell of the library was heard ringing, and several of the men servants were called into the room.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE reader cannot tell—nay, it is impossible to describe to him so as to give him even a faint idea of it—no, "*si j'avais une langue de fer toujours parlante*," as Voltaire has it, I could not explain the terrible temptation which an author has to struggle with when he has got his reader and some of his characters into what is vulgarly termed a predicament, and feels an inclination to leave them all there and go to some other part of the story. No man should be trusted with power. It is more than human nature can bear; and the despot's spirit is sure to seize upon every one who has his fellow creatures at his mercy. I feel at this present moment, dear reader, the tyrant strong within me, urging me to torture you even at the risk of losing my throne—to fly away from Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Morton and Dr. Western, and follow

out the course of Alfred Latimer. But I will resist it manfully; and if ever I should come into Parliament—which heaven forbid!—I will introduce a bill to render it penal for an author to tell his story in any other than a straightforward manner.

I will go on with Mr. Gibbs, *comme qui couste*; for do not suppose that to do so is without its inconveniences. On the contrary, I foresee many to the after telling of my tale; but still "for a great good I must do a little wrong;" though, be it remarked that principle—a very vicious one, by the way—should never be acted upon but once in his life by an author, and never in his whole life by a prime minister. It is contrary to morals, to logic, and to common sense to do wrong at all; and no motive can justify it, as shall be proved at large in some chapter especially devoted to that purpose; but enough of the question for the present, and now for Mr. Gibbs.

We left Dr. Western, Mr. Morton, and the traveling perfumer all in the library together, ringing the bell; but before we proceed to examine into the results of that phenomenon we must inquire into the causes—"Mon ami bellier toujours commence par le commencement." Upon my life, that is the third piece of French I have put into this chapter. I beg a thousand pardons, and trust to be forgiven; for I do not think there is as much of any foreign language, ancient or modern, in all my works put together.

However, we left, as I have said, Dr. Western, Mr. Morton, and Mr. Gibbs in the library together—I'll go on, now, upon my word—and the first sentence spoken was by Morton. "Well, Mr. Gibbs," he said, "What is all this? What have you discovered?"

"Why, I've got them, sir—I've got them!" cried Gibbs; "but there's no time to be lost if you want to have them."

"Who do you mean, my good friend?" exclaimed Dr. Western. "Do you mean Mr. Latimer?"

"No, no, no!" cried the traveler eagerly. "I mean the villains, the scoundrels, the chiefs of the whole gang, and I'm afraid every moment that they should get away."

"But give us some connected account of who they are, and what you mean!" said Mr. Morton, judging from the visitor's excited manner, soiled and deranged dress, and whirling words, that he had either drank too much, or that he was slightly insane. "We have already seen to-day, Mr. Gibbs, how unjustly suspicious may be entertained, and, of course, can do nothing without proper information."

"Well, then, if I must waste time," exclaimed the other, "all I have to say is that it is entirely owing to the fragrant Balm of Trinidad. If it hadn't been for that I should never have known anything at all. I went over to Sturton, sir, where I made a very convenient deal, and as I was coming back through the wood, just at the top of the hill on this side of Sturton, where I could look down over all the country, I saw two men creeping up by one of the narrow paths, and, not liking their looks at all—for I thought I knew the villains—I went on as fast as I could. They came nearly as fast, and, as the mischief would have it, it grew quite dark in the wood, and down I

fell, breaking my shin most desperately. Running was out of the question; if I lay there I was sure to be murdered; so I took to my old trick, and got up the tree. I had not been there two minutes when the blood-thirsty villains passed underneath, and I held my breath, and listened with all my ears. Well, I heard one say to the other 'I could have sworn I heard something running and the bushes shake;' and then the other answered 'It's very likely a deer got out of the park; the paling is very bad in some places.' You may fancy how I trembled; but then t'other one said 'It was more like a man's foot than a deer's,' so that made me tremble more, till I thought they would hear me shaking. But then one said to the other 'It's all quiet enough now, however;' and the other answered 'Ay; if it was any one, he's off by this time, and he couldn't be looking for us, at all events.' That was Jack Williams that spoke."

"Jack Williams," exclaimed Dr. Western; "why, I left him in the hands of the magistrates at—"

"Ay! he's out, however it happened," answered Mr. Gibbs, "and Brown with him, too, doctor. 'I'll take my oath of it, by the fragrant Balm of Trinidad, and all I hold sacred. I knew who they were pretty well when first I saw them, and then when I heard their tongues I was quite sure; besides, they called each other by their names, that is to say Brown called him 'Williams,' and he called Brown 'Tom.'"

"But where are they, then?" demanded Morton. "It would take a whole regiment to search that wood properly, even if they are there still."

"They are there still," answered Gibbs; "but they won't be there very long. But as to searching the wood, that's needless; for I can tell you exactly where they are, and where they intend to remain till two o'clock, for I heard all their arrangements just as plain as a sermon. They stopped a minute close under the trees after they had said what I have told you, as if they were listening, and then Brown said to Williams 'I don't hear anything, Williams, do you?' upon which Williams answered 'No, Tom, I don't; and, at all events, we had better get into the cave, for we must have some rest before we go on, and we are in less danger there than anywhere else.' 'So I think,' answered Brown; 'but if I once fall asleep, I'm not likely to wake in a hurry, for it's a tolerable long walk, I can tell you, Williams, with all the round we have made, and this bundle is devilish heavy. One of us had better keep awake whilst the other sleeps, and so take it in turns.' But Williams replied 'Never you fear, I shall wake at two o'clock; I always do, for that's the time I used to go up and watch. I must have some sleep, too, recollect, for I've had none these three nights, and we mustn't be much after two in starting again, that we may get on ten or twelve miles on the other side before daylight.' 'Well, come along, then,' answered Brown, 'and let us have something to eat and drink first. It's devilish little use having got the money if we are forced to starve ourselves notwithstanding.' After that they walked on a little, and I began to think how I should like to follow them and see where the

cave is they talked about ; but I very soon found that it was nearer than I thought, for I could hear that they did not go along the path, but pushed through the trees and bushes near towards the high bank, and then they seemed to come to a dead stop, for I could hear their voices talking again without seeming to move. They were far enough off to prevent me from knowing what they said, except when they spoke very loud ; but near enough to make me quite sure of whereabouts they were. Presently, too, there came a sort of crackling sound, and I could see a red light shining through the branches, which showed me that they had lighted a fire. The dogs did not know there was anybody so near, or I dare say they would not have made themselves so comfortable."

"This opportunity must not be lost," said Dr. Western, rising, and ringing the bell. "We must secure these men if possible."

"It would do me a great deal of good, your reverence," said Mr. Gibbs, "if you would just let me have a glass of wine, for, to tell the truth, I am somewhat tired, and a good deal exhausted, not having touched a bit of anything for a good many hours ; but still I am ready to go the minute the others are."

"You deserve high praise for your courage and activity, Mr. Gibbs," replied the worthy clergyman, "and you shall have anything that you desire which the house can afford. Bring in some wine and some cold meat," he continued, as the servant appeared ; "but first tell the coachman to come here directly. Now pray, Mr. Gibbs, let us hear how you escaped from your very unpleasant situation in the tree."

"It was all owing to the fragrant Balm of Trinidad," replied his visitor ; "for having a specimen bottle in my pocket, as soon as I found that the murderers were safely lodged at such a distance as not to hear a little rustle, I took it out, and, pushing down my stocking, rubbed my shin till the pain quite went off, otherwise I couldn't have walked a step, I'm sure. I kept a sharp ear upon my friends in the cave, however, and rubbed and listened, and listened and rubbed, for full half an hour. But still they kept talking and eating I fancy, and I could hear a creak drawn, and then they laughed."

"Laughed !" exclaimed Dr. Western. "I am sometimes inclined to wonder how human beings ever laugh."

"It was Tom Brown, I think," returned Mr. Gibbs ; "for I never saw Williams laugh in my life, and I don't think he ever does. But some time after that they began to be more silent, speaking for a minute or two, and then breaking off again ; and then there came a word or two and an answer ; and then they were still so long I thought they were both asleep ; but then they began again ; and so it went on till it must have been half-past nine, I dare say. After that all was quiet ; but I dare not move for a full half hour, during which time I considered what I had best do, and gradually I began to take courage, and I determined to come down, and get across as fast as possible, for it was the nearest magistrate's house ; and as I grew bolder and bolder, I thought I might just as well take a look at their cave before I went ; and when I was quite sure they must be asleep, I got slowly down the tree from knot to knot, making no

noise at all, and then crept quietly through the grass towards the chestnut-trees and bushes under the bank, making as near as I could for the spot where I had seen the light glimmering when I was up-stairs in the tree, for I could not see it now for the brushwood, but I smelt it strong enough, notwithstanding. I picked my steps like a cat over the wet ground, and presently as I moved about, I spied a gap amongst the leaves and branches, not bigger than my hand, through which I saw something red shining, and getting as near as I could I peeped through."

"And what did you see ?" asked Morton, as the coachman entered, followed by the footman with a tray of cold meat and wine in his hands, and Mr. Gibbs paused in his narrative.

"Why, I saw the fire of sticks beginning to die out," replied Mr. Gibbs, "and that great big hulking fellow, Brown, lying upon his back with a bundle under his head, and Williams sitting with his back against the bank, and his head leaning forward, sound asleep. As I stood there Brown began to snore. You thought it very horrible, sir, that such men should laugh, but I can tell you it's very horrible indeed to hear a murderer snore ; so creeping away again without making the least noise, I marked one or two of the large trees near with my knife, and then came down back again as fast as I could to old Blackmore, the gardener's cottage. I had to knock the old man up out of his bed, for his boat was chained and padlocked ; but when he saw me, and heard what I wanted it for—though I didn't tell him all—he let me have it willingly enough, and I punted myself across here without more ado. The boat is just down by the bank there, and I'm ready to go as soon as I have had something to refresh me a little."

While Mr. Gibbs proceeded with great self-possession and satisfaction to comfort himself with the good things set before him, a consultation took place between Dr. Western, Mr. Morton, and the coachman, as to what would be the best plan to pursue for the purpose of capturing the two malefactors, whose place of concealment had been discovered by the worthy traveler. Considerable difficulties, however, presented themselves. The lateness of the hour—the want of all preparation—the absence of the only constable that Mallington boasted—the distance of Dr. Western's house from the village—and the early period at which Williams and his companion were to start upon their onward journey—were all impediments which were difficult to be overcome. Dr. Western was a man of peace ; but, nevertheless, his sense of duty as a magistrate led him at first to resolve upon going in person, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Morton dissuaded him.

"I shall go, certainly, my dear sir," said the young gentleman himself, "for you know that I have a personal stake in this matter ; when, besides forwarding the ends of justice, I would fain secure the papers which one or the other of these men undoubtedly possess. But both your age and your profession, my dear sir, should prevent you from going ; and, doubtless, we shall be able to get enough men by the way to render our proceedings secure."

"I don't know, sir," said the coachman,

scratching his head; "but, if you cross over in the boat, you'll find nobody but old Blackmore, and he's too lame to be of any good. You and I, and the gentleman there might be enough, it's true; but, depend upon it, the fellows will fight like mad, for I suppose they've got a rope round their necks any how."

"Doesn't Miles, one of the keepers, live up at the corner of the park by Mrs. Hazlewood's cottage?" asked Morton; "and we can easily take that in our way."

"Yes sir, so we can," answered the coachman; "and a strapping chap he is too. I didn't think of him."

"Then we shall be enough, my dear sir," rejoined Mr. Morton, turning to the rector with a cheerful smile. "Four stout men will certainly be sufficient against two. Though any odds are justifiable in such a case, I should be almost ashamed of taking more. We had better have some arms, however, if you have any in the house. If not, I must send for my pistols to the inn."

"Oh, the footman has a couple of brace in his pantry, and I have a long-unused gun upstairs," replied Dr. Western.

"I've got a pistol, too," said the coachman, and Mr. Gibbs chimed in, announcing that he had his two little barkers in his pocket, never having gone unprovided since his head had suffered in the very wood to which he was now destined. He started up at the same time, declaring himself quite ready; and, indeed, he showed a degree of alacrity and resolution which raised him high in the opinion of Mr. Morton. The gun and pistols were procured, and then a sufficient quantity of cord was sought for and cut at convenient lengths, with a portion of which each of the expeditionary party furnished themselves.

"Now, go out with the coachman and down to the boat, Mr. Gibbs," said Mr. Morton, as soon as all was ready; "I will join you in a minute;" and then turning to Dr. Western, he added, "I will just go and bid Louisa and Mrs. Evelyn good evening. It will be much better, however, that they should know nothing of this affair till it is over, as it would render them uneasy during the night, and poor Louisa has enough to grieve her without any further anxiety."

Dr. Western agreed cordially in this view, but at the same time he added, "You must return and let me know, my dear sir, for I shall certainly sit up till it is all over."

Morton promised to do as he requested, and then returning to the drawing-room, laughed with Louisa and Mrs. Evelyn for a moment over Mr. Gibbs's strange interruption, and merely adding that he thought it would end in the capture of two notorious malefactors, took his leave with as light an air as if he was going to a party of pleasure.

CHAPTER LXXX.

The moon had somewhat declined, the high slopes of the ground behind Mallington Park, the deep rounds of the wood in the foreground, even the lower part of the park itself, though turned to the south, were all in shadow; but yet

the river in some of its bends caught the rays of the declining planet, and glistened like silver as it flowed along. The boat had been drawn up as near to the rectory as possible, where the stream, expanding, flowed on more gently, leaving a fringe of reeds, mingled with the large round leaves of the water lily, on that side of the river; and in the punt itself appeared, when Morton approached, the coachman and Mr. Gibbs. He concluded, of course, that they were waiting there for him; but, nevertheless, he could not, as he hurried on, divine with what amusement they were filling up their time; for the coachman, with his body slightly bent, and the pole in his hand, seemed very much in the attitude of one who was lifting out a large fish with a landing net, while Mr. Gibbs, on his knees, in the bottom of the punt, was stooping over still further, and reaching out with his hands, apparently to secure something that his companion was endeavoring to guide to the side of their little bark.

Just when Morton came up the worthy traveler made a sharp grasp at something, exclaiming the moment after, "I have got it—it's a hat."

He then emptied the water out, and turning to the young gentleman as he stepped into the punt, he showed him his prize, saying "Here's a hat in the water. Isn't that funny, sir!—a very good hat, too, and can't have been long in, or it would have fallen to pieces."

"Keep it safely, Mr. Gibbs," answered Morton, who saw more in the fact than the other seemed to do. "There, push off, coachman, as fast as you can. You had better, perhaps, mark the hat, Mr. Gibbs, for we must leave it in the boat, and it may be important to identify it."

"Here's something written in the inside already," answered the traveler, "if I could but make out what it is," and he turned it to the moonlight, but in vain. "I'll mark it at all events," he continued, taking out his pencil and marking a broad cross on the leather. "There, that will prevent mistakes. I shouldn't wonder if it were that young Mr. Latimer's hat. He came back without one, they say, and took a new one with him."

Mr. Morton did not reply, and the punt soon glided into the darker part of the stream, and approached the opposite bank, where the whole party stepped out, and the boat was made fast. Morton then led the way at once towards the cottage of the man Miles; but by this time it was past twelve o'clock, and the good countryman and all his family were sound asleep in their beds, whence it was very difficult to rouse them. At length, after long knocking at the door, and tapping at the window, Miles himself was called out of his bed; and, as apprehension was the order of the day, and as he did not choose to give such nocturnal visitors an opportunity of forcing their way in, he brought his face as near as possible to the casement, and opened it, inquiring "Who the devil are you?"

"Get on some clothes and come out, Miles," replied Mr. Morton. "Bring your gun with you, too, with a ball or two, fit for it, if you've got any. We've some business to do."

"Lord bless me sir! I didn't know you," answered the man in a respectful tone; but, rubbing his eyes heartily at the same time, "What

is it all about! The season is too far gone for shooting a buck."

"I'll tell you presently," answered Morton; "but make haste, my good friend, for we have no time to lose."

The man retired, promptly threw on some clothes, and calling one of his little girls to shut the door after him, speedily appeared with gun and powder flask in one hand and some bullets in the other.

"You had better charge," said Morton, and the man obeyed without hesitation, but still not without some surprise. Mr. Gibbs he stared at heartily, but recognized Dr. Western's coachman, and asked him how he did in a semi-somnambulous manner, while he went on cramming his gun as hard as he could drive.

"The French haven't landed, have they?" he asked at length, as he followed Morton up the sandy lane under the park wall.

"Oh, no," answered Morton. "We have not such serious enemies to deal with as that, my good fellow. We have discovered where two of the men are lying hid who are suspected of having broken into Mallington Hall, and murdered poor Edmonds."

"Oh, d—n them!" cried the gamekeeper; "if I catch them I'll knock their brains out."

"No, no," answered Morton. "You must be so good as to follow your orders exactly. I'll tell you what to do when we get near the spot, and you must do neither more nor less."

"Where be they?" asked Miles, in an eager tone, which showed that sleep was now quite thrown off. "In the chestnut wood, I'll bet any money."

"No," answered Morton; "in a cave or hollow piece of ground in Wenlock Wood, I understand."

"What! Gammer Hurry's Hole?" exclaimed Miles, stopping suddenly. "Well, that's the very place for them to hide, to be sure. I haven't been there this many a year, and I didn't think of it. But stop a bit, stop a bit. If they are in there you'll want some light, for at the back part it's as black as the coal-hole, even in the day time, and we may all get our throats cut before we know it."

This was a point that had neither struck Morton, Mr. Gibbs, nor the coachman, and for a moment or two it puzzled them all very much.

Miles soon came to their relief. "I've got a dark lantern at home," he said. "You three go up to the common, at the back of the park, and I'll run and fetch it, and be up with you in a minute."

They reached the top of the hill, however, some minutes before they were overtaken by the gamekeeper; and Morton took advantage of the opportunity to cross-examine Mr. Gibbs in regard to the locality and circumstances of the cave, and also to arrange his plan of operations.

"Two of us had better go in first," he said, "and two stay at the entrance, in case the others should miss them, and they should run out. As soon, however, as we have got hold of them, the others can rush in to help."

"They were both close at the mouth," said Mr. Gibbs. "But who's to go in first?"

Morton mistook him, and thought that one of

the qualms of apprehension which he acknowledged having felt in the tree had now got possession of him again, and he accordingly replied, "You and the coachman had better stay at the entrance, Mr. Gibbs; you can hold the lantern, so as to give us as much light as possible, and knock any of them down who attempt to pass."

But the safety that is in numbers had inspired Mr. Gibbs with the spirit of a hero. He was not at all unwilling to take his part in a fight, though he objected strongly to having the fight all to himself. "No, no, sir!" he exclaimed, "on my life, that's not fair. I found the fellows out, and I ought to be allowed my part in taking them."

"So you shall, my good friend," replied Morton; "but only, as I think that Miles is a stronger man—"

"Oh! I'm stronger than I look," answered Mr. Gibbs, interrupting him, "and devilish active. Let me once get my fingers on one of their throats, and the fellow shan't throw me off more easily than a pinned bull does a bull-dog."

"Well, so be it," answered Morton, who recollecting that Miles was a married man, with a large family dependent upon him, thought it as well that the more dangerous part of the undertaking should fall upon the dapper traveler.

When the gamekeeper joined them, however, though he did not venture to express his dissent so boldly as Mr. Gibbs had done, yet he grumbled a little at the prospect of not being allowed, as he termed it, "to have a lick at the fellows who murdered poor Edmonds."

Morton replied, "You must remember that they are only suspected, my good friend, and, therefore, there must be no more violence than is necessary to secure them. Probably, however, we shall all have as much of it as we well deserve. So now that we understand the whole, let us go on in perfect silence; and remember, Miles, not to unshade the lantern till we are close to the entrance of the cave. Step as quietly as possible also; and you, Miles, lead the way, as I suppose you know the place best."

"Know Gammer Hurry's Hole! Ay, that I do," answered the gamekeeper; "but what am I to do if I am not to go in when I get there?"

"You keep close to the right of the mouth. The coachman, who must come last, will keep close to the left, and Mr. Gibbs and I will go in between you as soon as you unshade the lantern."

"Very well, sir," answered Miles, "just as you like, though I think you had better leave it to us, in case harm should come of it."

"No, no, that will not do," answered Morton. "I never put other men upon tasks that I am afraid to undertake myself. Now go on, Miles."

The man led the way across the common till he reached the edge of Wenlock Wood; but then, instead of taking the path which Mr. Gibbs had followed once before, he struck away to the left, skirting the wood, till he came nearly to the spot where the high bank in which the cave was dug fell away into the broken ground of the common. This proceeding agitated Mr. Gibbs a good deal, for he thought that the man

must have mistaken the place; and, plucking Mr. Morton by the coat, he whispered his apprehensions.

"Hush!" answered Morton, "he is right, depend upon it;" and at the same moment the gamekeeper turned into the wood, where a somewhat broader and less entangled path was found under the shelter of the sandy banks.

Slowly and cautiously they walked along, keeping close to each other, and preserving a profound silence; and it is vain to say that the sensation was not somewhat awful, as, in the depth of the night, and with no other light but that afforded by the sky above, bright though it might be with the moon's rays, they walked on through the deep wood, and remembered that a struggle was about to take place with men whose hands were already imbrued in human blood, and who would, in all probability, struggle with the courage of despair. Every now and then, where the banks were a little lower, the moonlight poured from the south-west upon their path, streaming between the boles of the trees that crested the high ground above; but those occasional glimpses of brightness tended rather to render the gloom more deep when the darkness succeeded again.

When they had gone about a quarter of a mile a bird of the raven species—whether their steps had caught his watchful ear or whether he was already on the wing, I cannot tell—flew over their heads, with a hoarse croak, and they could hear the strong feathers of his wings flap amongst the branches. These were the only sounds they heard, all the rest was still, and solemn, and silent; not a breath of air was felt; the thin branches of the birch waved not, and the light leaves of the aspen remained at rest. Their own step was all that moved, and each took especial care to tread as lightly as possible, and to hold the cautious breath. At length a faint odor of burnt wood was perceptible, hanging about amongst the trees; and Miles, turning partly round, touched Mr. Morton on the shoulder, as an intimation that they were approaching the place.

Morton instantly drew one of the pistols from his pocket and held it in his left hand, giving the same sign to those behind him; and, after taking about twenty steps further, the gamekeeper stood still. Though completely dark, and though the fire which Mr. Gibbs had seen had now gone out, Morton could perceive distinctly enough the dark outline of the mouth of the cave, and when Miles paused and faced round on the right-hand side, the young gentleman did the same within about a yard of him. Mr. Gibbs also approached, and then Morton touched the gamekeeper as a signal to unshade the lantern. Just at the same moment there was a slight noise in the cave, as if some one moved; but the covering over the lantern was instantly drawn back, and the figures of the two sleeping men were straight before them. The feeble rays penetrated faintly into the cave, showing near the entrance the rough smoke-begrimed sides, but suffering the further parts to rest in obscurity. They flashed full upon the faces of Williams and his companion, however, and while Brown rolled over uneasily on his side, but without waking, the former started at once upon his feet, exclaiming, "Ay, ay, sir,"

as if suddenly called by some one in command over him.

Without giving him a moment's pause Morton rushed in upon him and grasped him by the collar; but even in the short interval, roused completely by the sound of feet, the miscreant was upon his guard, and grappling tight with his antagonist, a fearful struggle commenced between them. At the same moment Mr. Gibbs sprang upon Brown and held him down, meeting at first but little resistance, for the man's senses were completely buried in sleep; but as the grasp of his assailant began to oppress his throat, he too roused himself and struck the traveler a tremendous blow on the head as he started up, but without inducing Gibbs to let go his hold. Then seizing him by the waist he endeavored with his great strength to dash his head against the side of the cavern; but with active dexterity Gibbs contrived to avoid the blow, keeping fast to his throat, to use his own simile, like a bull-dog, while Brown raged and swore with every blasphemy that the vocabulary of crime could supply.

The contest, in the meantime, between Morton and Williams was more silent and apparently less violent, but more deadly. They were better matched in all respects; the gentleman was taller, as active, as much inured to exercise and danger; but not so muscular as his opponent. He had his pistol cocked in his hand, too, but that only embarrassed him, for he was determined not to use it but in case of the last necessity, and as he was presenting it at his head with a low threat to fire, a well-aimed blow knocked it out of his hand, and it went off as it struck the ground. They grappled with each other instantly, and wrestling with all their power, each strove to throw the other, till Williams, finding that he had to contend with one as powerful and as skillful as himself, relaxed his hold for a moment, and thrust his hand into the pocket of his jacket. It was for life or death; for he knew that the withdrawal of his hand from Morton's shoulder would give his antagonist one fearful advantage; but he saw the two men at the mouth of the cave; he heard Miles exclaim "Hang it, this will never do!" and beheld him set down the lantern to start forward. His only chance was in dispatching his adversary at once; and the next instant a pistol was in his hand. Morton saw it, turned towards him, and put forth all his strength. Williams staggered, wavered, lost his balance; but still, with the pertinacity of the wolf, that bites even in dying, he strove to aim the weapon aright as he fell, still clinging to his enemy with his left hand. Miles beheld the whole, as he rushed on, and grasped at the felon's wrist, turning it somewhat from its course; but at the same moment that Williams fell headlong, the pistol went off; and Morton cast himself upon him, holding his chest down with his knees.

"Are you hurt, sir! are you hurt!" cried the gamekeeper.

"Never mind! never mind!" answered Morton, "Tie him! tie him!" and at the same time he pressed heavily upon his antagonist's chest.

With rapidity and skill Miles slipped a noose over Williams's arms, while Morton held him down, drew it tight, and tied it fast. "Now,

"help them there! help them!" said the young gentleman, rising; and as Miles sprang away to aid Gibbs and the coachman, who were both struggling with Brown, Morton drew a second pistol from his pocket, turned to the mouth of the cave, and sat down, keeping a wary eye upon Williams. The man stood for an instant with his eyes bent upon the ground, without turning even a glance to the strife which went on for a moment near, ere his comrade was finally overcome and tied; but at length, with a slow step, he advanced towards Morton.

"Stand back!" said the young gentleman, as he saw him approach, raising his pistol at the same time; "I have not strength to struggle with you now, so I must fire, however unwillingly, if you attempt to escape."

"I was only coming to say I am afraid you are hurt, sir," answered Williams, in a mild tone; "I am sorry for it; but my blood was up, and I could not help it."

At the same moment Miles seized him by the collar, and dragged him back; but Morton exclaimed, "Do not ill-use him—do not ill-use him, on any account!" and the other three gathering round the young gentleman, whose face had turned somewhat pale, saw the blood streaming rapidly over the breast of his shirt from the right side as he leaned upon the left arm.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

In the prison of the town of —, and in the best room of the prison, for in those days every man was considered innocent till he was proved guilty, and no man was treated to the utmost rigors of imprisonment till he was condemned by a jury of his country—we have changed all these things now, and it is quite as bad to be suspected of any serious crime as to commit a minor one—as Captain Tankerville at his ease. He had a bottle of wine before him, and a veal pie—both excellent things, when they are good of their kind—and he reasoned with himself, as he sat, upon fate and human circumstances, and was quite as good a philosopher in his way, as far as ethics were concerned at least, as many a man who has written a large folio, and begotten for himself a great name. True, it is probable that his lucubrations would not greatly have tended to improve the moral or religious tone of society; but the same may be said, unfortunately, of almost every philosopher that ever lived. I say almost, because there are one or two great exceptions. But search through a large library, dear reader, and point out those exceptions one by one, and your feet will sooner have been tired of moving from shelf to shelf, than your tongue of pronouncing the names of the few clever men who have been good men too.

Captain Tankerville began by thinking of the strange turn circumstances had taken in, bringing him to the jail of a small country town, when he felt himself well qualified to figure in a more extended sphere in the capital itself. "It's not an uncomfortable jail either," he said to himself, looking round—for Captain Tankerville was a connoisseur in jails, and had had some experience—"It's not an uncomfortable jail either,

and devilish civil fellows in it; but it is strange to find one's self here. What an atrocious thing law is! Here am I shut up, for three or four days perhaps, for nothing in life but for playing at cards in an inn on a Sunday. It is true old Quatterly says he can prove a forgery against me—he's a clever fellow if he does. That cock's been tried before, I can tell him, and won't fight; but if he did he might run a chance of twisting my neck, after all. What an infamous shame to hang a man as one would a dog, merely for writing ten or twelve black strokes at the bottom of a piece of paper. It's contrary to every principle of justice and equity—it's pure murder. If I had to make laws I'd hang all those who have made them. *Mas* was intended to be free. I don't suppose, when he was first turned out, that even a spadeful of earth was given to him as his own. Then whence does he derive his right to anything he has! It's all stuff. The whole world is properly in common, and each man has a right to take what he can get, and keep what he can. Why should not I write down upon a piece of paper the simple words, *George Jacobson*, just as well as any other man. I entered into no pledge with my godfathers and godmothers that I would stick to the name of *Tom Tankerville* all my life. Why doesn't a name wear out as well as anything else by too much use! and it's devilish hard that one may not get a new one, just as a man gets a new coat—that's cursed bad wine: brandy, sugar, and sloe juice. I wonder if one can't get anything better in this stupid town;" and he rang the bell which hung beside the mantel-piece.

One of the turnkeys came in immediately, for Captain Tankerville bled freely, as they said in the prison, and, thinking he had done his dinner, was about to remove the things; but the captain stopped him, exclaiming "Stay, stay; I haven't half done. I want some more wine, Mr. What's-your-name; and something better than that, too. I never tasted such stuff as that. You may take it away and drink it yourself if you like; but get me a bottle of good real old port, that will make the evening pass comfortably—and, I say, if you have anything new and entertaining come in, bring it in here just for an hour or so, for the sake of society. I'm beginning to get devilish dull."

"You don't seem so, I'm sure, sir," replied the turnkey; "but I'll tell Mr. Wilson what you say," and, withdrawing with the bottle in his hand, he went and spoke with his principal.

"Go and get him a bottle of old port from the Hart," said Mr. Wilson; "there's four shillings to pay for it—charge him eight, you know—but let it be good, for conscience sake. What's come in?"

"Nothing, sir," replied the turnkey, "but a petty larceny and an assault locked up in default."

"They might as well have sent that to the cage, I think," said Mr. Wilson; "I don't like to have such dirty jobs here—but I'll go and talk to him myself and amuse him. He seems a rollicking sort of blade, and takes it mighty easy."

"Ay, that he do," answered the turnkey. "I dare say he thinks the old gentleman won't persecute."

"Oh, but they'll make him," answered the principal jailer. "They have bound him over, I think."

"No, sir, the captain is only remanded," answered his subordinate. "But, hark! they are bringing some one in now. Why, it's that smart-dressed boy as was set in the stocks!"

As he spoke he held the door of the room, which was near the entrance of the prison, ajar in his hand, and Mr. Wilson sauntered out with his coat tails turned back as he had been standing by the fire. When he saw young Blackmore, however, and heard that he too was remanded on the charge of being an accessory in the robbery of Mallington Hall, he thought he would be just the person to suit Captain Tankerville, and accordingly ordered him to be put into that worthy's room till a cell could be got ready for him. There were plenty quite ready in the jail, but there are conventionalities in prisons as well as other places.

When young John Blackmore found into whose society he was introduced he was greatly relieved and delighted, and the appetite with which Captain Tankerville was eating his veal pie, though a great vacuity in one side showed that it was not the first attack he had made upon it, gave him quite a new view of prison life, and taught him the great advantage of "a light heart," whatever may be the benefit of the other article which is sometimes supposed, in conjunction with it, to facilitate a man in going "through the world." He had a great respect for Captain Tankerville. He was a man of the first class in the profession which he had shown himself anxious to follow, and the gay and cordial manner with which the worthy captain treated him inspired confidence and won regard.

"Ah, Blackee, my boy!" cried the captain, "what, have they grabbed you? Delighted to see you. You are welcome to the stone pitcher. Sit down and have a bit of pie and a glass of wine when it comes. I'll treat you."

Young Blackmore took a seat, and, with his usual effeminate manner, received the captain's civilities; but when the wine came, and he had taken a glass or two, he felt his spirits greatly revived, and the stocks were forgotten.

"Now, tell us what you're in for, Blackee," said the captain, after they had conversed and drank for some little time, "Something capital, I hope."

"Capital! la, captain, don't talk of capital!" replied young Blackmore. "You make me quite nervous again."

"I'm talking of capital fun, not capital punishment," replied his fellow prisoner, laughing; "but whatever it is, you had better have a little good advice. A young fellow like you, when he first begins, is sure to get himself into some scrape, if he hasn't some friend at his elbow to tell him to keep out of it."

"I've got into a terrible scrape already," said John Blackmore.

"The more reason you should take advice from my long experience," answered his sage companion. "This is the fourteenth time I have been in jail, Blackee—eight times for debt, and six for peccadilloes—and I never yet failed to get my head out almost as fast as it was in; so tell me what's the matter, and you shall have a good legal opinion without a fee."

"Why, they've put me in here," replied the lad, "for overhearing something that Jack Williams said to Bill Maltby about robbing Mallington House, and not telling."

"Oh, Jack Williams!" said Captain Tankerville. "Then Latimer's in for it too, and I may be excused for not giving him his revenge, as I promised."

Young Blackmore nodded his head in token of assent, and Captain Tankerville went on in a grave, deliberate, thoughtful manner. "So, you overheard them, did you? and you didn't tell. Well, that certainly makes you *particeps criminis*. An awkward position, Mr. Blackmore, especially if you had any finger in the pie—I don't mean your whole hand. I mean only if you fingered it—carrying messages, running for horses, giving a nod or a wink, and such things. Now, if murder had been committed, the question would have been settled. You'd have had to taste hemp, Blackee. It's rather bitter, but not so much so as people imagine, I have a notion, and one thing is, it's soon over."

"They say murder was committed," replied the young man, in a low tone, fixing his eyes upon Captain Tankerville's countenance, as if his life depended upon the next word.

"Ah! that's awkward," answered his fellow prisoner. "Take a glass of wine, Blackee. We'll have another bottle when that's done. Now, as far as I can see, you've got but one chance. You must stave—I dare say you don't care a straw about Williams—nor I either, for that matter—nor about Alfred Latimer—nor I either. They are both sure to be hanged, any way; so, if you can get your neck out of the noose between them, you are a fool if you don't do it."

"But I did confess," replied the youth, setting down his half emptied glass of wine; and he proceeded to tell his companion all that had happened to him during the preceding night and that eventful morning, and added by saying that the constable, as he had brought him along, had told him that the whole story was out, and the people hunting for Williams, Latimer, and Brown, all over the country; "and so they took me out of the stocks and put me in here," he added.

"See what it is not to have an experienced hand to consult with," rejoined Captain Tankerville. "If I had been near you, I'd have put you right in a minute. You should have stuck to your story to Williams's face, whether it was true or false. Then you would have got clear off, and, perhaps, been rewarded; now you've only one chance, my lad. You must come back to your old story, and say that the sight of the fellow frightened you out of your wits; then if you can just tell where Williams is gone, so as to get him nabbed, you'll save your bacon."

"I don't know," answered the youth, mournfully.

"Do you know where young Latimer is gone?" cried Captain Tankerville.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed young Blackmore, joyfully; "I know where he intended to go, and how they arranged all their plans, though at that time I wasn't aware that he was to have any hand in this job. He was first to go to Portsmouth, and then over to France, to a

place called Havre, where Williams was to join him, and then they were to go pirating in the Levant together."

"A very pretty scheme!" cried Captain Tankerville, laughing heartily. "Quite romantic, upon my life. Two gentlemen starting in the characters of Blue Beard and Black Beard." As he spoke he approached the bell and gave it a smart pull.

"What are you going to do! what are you going to do!" cried young Blackmore.

"To save your life, my lad," replied Captain Tankerville. "It's very seldom indeed that one can tell the truth with any advantage to one's self. I never knew above two or three instances of it. But this is one, and it shows a man's skill if he finds out when it is just as good for him to tell the truth as to tell a lie. So now you have nothing to do but to go and swear where Alfred Latimer may be found, and, if he's caught, you may be safe enough. I say, my good friend," he continued, as the turnkey opened the door, "just tell the governor to step here. This young man has got something to tell which may further the ends of justice immensely; and, as I am always fond of seeing justice done, I think it quite as well that the magistrates should know it. But you had better be quick, or the fellows may have got beyond reach."

Mr. Wilson appeared in a minute, and heard all that young Blackmore had to say with a dry attentive countenance. At first his former tergiversation, which had reached the worthy officer's ears, seemed to have produced an unfavorable impression in regard to the young man's veracity; but as soon as he heard what he had to say of Alfred Latimer's escape, he replied "You must come before the magistrates. Send up Bill here to keep him safe," he continued, addressing the turnkey who stood behind, "and let some one keep a look-out for Mr. Soames; he was down at the bench just now."

"He was over at the Hart asking when the play went," rejoined the turnkey.

"Well, see for him—see for him! and let him know that we've got information," said Mr. Wilson; and those precautions had their desired effect, for John Blackmore's new deposition was made before Soames had quitted the town, and furnished with the best information he could get, and all legal powers, as well as an assistant, he jumped into a post-chaise, and drove off towards Portsmouth.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE post-chaise which contained Alfred Latimer and his poor bride rolled along as fast as two horses could draw it; but yet not fast enough for his impatience, for remorse and fear were upon him. He fancied that he had taken all his measures so well, indeed, that suspicion was not likely to fall upon him speedily, if at all. He fancied that it would be some time before the bloody clothes which he had left at Mallington House would be discovered: and as no one knew that they belonged to him, that it would be still longer before any circumstance would show that they had ever been in his

possession. Even his marriage with Lucy he thought would tend more than all the rest to the concealment of his part in the crime that had been committed, and he argued and re-argued with himself to prove, to his own satisfaction, that he was quite safe. Yet fear was in his heart, for, with a very few exceptions, terror is always the follower of crime. He could not banish it; he could not drive it away. More than once he pulled up the covering over the little window at the back of the chaise and looked out behind; more than once he called to the postboy to "get on," though he was going as fast as he could.

Remorse also was doing its part bitterly and terribly, and the struggling feelings within his bosom strangely affected his demeanor. Sometimes he would fall into deep and gloomy fits of thought—sometimes he would answer Lucy sharply and angrily—sometimes he was prodigal of tenderness and caresses. He loved her certainly better than he had ever loved any human being. He had always done so, and now he clung to her as the only solace left, and the only fragment that he had saved out of the wreck of better things left for him; and yet the impatience and irritation of his mind would not suffer him to be wholly kind. But she bore all with gentleness and affection, as she had been lately taught to bear; and she now saw that something, she knew not what, weighed heavily upon his mind. For a moment at one time she thought, with deep grief, that it might be his marriage with her that irritated him—that he might regret it—that he might feel that it had degraded him; but then came one of those fits of tenderness which showed her that such could not be the case.

She little thought, poor girl, that she was sitting side by side with the murderer of her father; and that the hand, the burning hand which clasped hers was stained with her father's blood.

Onward, however, they went, and had gone near fifty miles on their way before Harry Soames, the constable, set out from Mallington in pursuit of them. But though poor Lucy was tired, and Alfred Latimer himself became drowsy with the exertions and the watchfulness of the preceding night, still he went on, till towards eleven they reached the town of Southampton. As soon as the chaise drove up at the door of the inn, Alfred Latimer inquired when the packet would sail for Havre, and, to his great relief, heard that it got under weigh at four o'clock on the following morning. He immediately sent to secure berths for himself and his wife, and after a light meal, bade Lucy retire to rest for an hour or two. But he himself did not lie down, fearful lest the people of the inn, notwithstanding all his injunctions, should not call him in time; and he remained dozing by the fire of the sitting-room in a half-delirious sleep. The horrors that he underwent during those three hours that he thus remained are indescribable. Scarcely had he closed his eyes for five minutes when the figure of poor Edmonds, as he lay bleeding on the floor the moment after he had shot him, presented itself to his sight, and he woke with a start of agony. Then, when he slept again, he seemed to hear loud voices shouting, and peo-

ple screaming out his name, and calling "Stop the murderer!" and again sleep was banished. Thus it went on all the time, till at the hour appointed the punctual porter of the inn came with a candle in his hand to call the gentleman and lady that were going by the packet.

Lucy was soon roused, and ready to depart. The trunks and boxes they had brought were put upon a wheelbarrow; the bills paid, the servants fed, and with the daughter of his victim hanging on his arm, Alfred Latimer took his way down through the dark streets to the port.

It was a fine clear night, the wind was light and favorable, and no obstacle or impediment presented itself. The careless examination to which goods going abroad at that time were subjected at the Custom House was soon got over; one trunk was opened, and then all were marked with chalk, and carried to the vessel. Alfred Latimer and Lucy went on board at the same time, and both went down below to wait for the ship sailing.

In about twenty minutes after, there was a good deal of noise and swearing upon deck, and Alfred Latimer looked anxiously towards the cabin door. But presently a sort of swaying motion was felt, the ship began to bend considerably to one side, and the noise of rushing water showed him that they had got under weigh. It was a blessed relief, but still he could not rest; and as he and Lucy were the only cabin passengers, he laid down for a short time on the sofa by the side of her berth, and then started up again, saying he would go upon deck to see how they got on.

He found everything now calm and quiet; the ship going easily through the water, and the different lights that marked the shoals and headlands in that part of the channel distinctly visible. He wished that they were all passed; but still it was some satisfaction to be at sea, and he gazed over for a few minutes into the water as the ship sent it in foam from her sides. Presently, however, the captain gave some orders, the speed of the packet was slackened, and then apparently she stopped, without however letting down the anchor, and in reality driving on slowly with the tide.

"What is the matter?" asked Alfred Latimer of one of the sailors who came up the gangway with a coil of rope on his arm.

"Nothing but a boat from Portsmouth, sir," answered the man, unfastening the bolt where what is called the accommodation ladder is placed.

Alfred Latimer asked no more questions, but instantly went below, and there remained listening, with the cabin-door ajar in his hand. Presently the sound of oars, a grating noise against the ship's side, and voices speaking were heard; a good deal of hallooing followed, and then some conversation upon deck; but the unhappy young man could not distinguish anything that was said. In another instant, however, steps were heard coming down, and he closed the door hastily, and laid down upon the sofa again.

The persons who had descended went into what was called the gentlemen's cabin first; but then almost immediately returned, and the door of that in which Alfred Latimer and his poor

wife were was thrown unceremoniously open. The first who came in was the captain of the ship; but two other faces appeared behind him, and in one of them the wretched young man instantly recognised a countenance which he knew too well—that of Harry Soames, the constable of Mallington.

His fate was no longer doubtful; a chill like that of death spread on his whole frame, and though he shook not, nor uttered a word, it seemed as if all his limbs were changed into stone.

"Ah, Master Alfred!" cried the constable, in a familiar tone, "I've caught you at last, have I! 'Twas devilish clever of you that doubling upon me at Andover, and taking to Southampton instead of Portsmouth. But you must come along now, and I am sorry to say I must put the darbies upon you, for you see the offence is a big 'un."

Alfred Latimer stood before him without word or motion, with his eyes gazing upon him, his lips quivering, and his face as pale as death.

"What is the matter!" cried Lucy, rising in terror. "What is all this, in heaven's name!"

"Why, it's a bad job, Miss Lucy," replied Harry Soames. "I must take your lover here—that's to say your husband, for I hear you are married outright—away with me. I've got nothing to do with you. The warrant's against him, and you can go where you like—to France, if it suits you."

"I will go wherever he goes," answered Lucy, clinging to the arm of her husband.

"Can't allow that," said Mr. Soames, in a decided tone; "and besides, you see it is impossible. I and the other constable have got to take him back, and the shay will but hold three anyhow. Howsoever, you can come after us if you like, though I'd advise you not."

"Where are you going to take him!" cried Lucy. "What are you putting those things on him for!" and she gazed with terror upon the handcuffs that they were fastening upon his unresisting arms.

"Why, we are going back to Mallington," answered Harry Soames, "and that as fast as we can go; and as for why we are putting these on him, you see it's for murder"—he had very nearly added "of your own father," but he had once had a child, and he paused, thinking, "I will not say that."

"For murder!" exclaimed Lucy, "for murder! Well, he is my husband, and I will go with him, whatever he has done."

"But I tell you you can't, ma'm," answered Harry Soames. "It's no use argufying, it can't be done."

"Then I'll follow," said Lucy mournfully—"I'll follow, wherever he goes."

"Come," said the captain of the vessel, "you had better get him out of the ship as fast as you can. I can't lay to here all night. I thought there was something wrong about him when first I saw him. Come, take him away to the boat."

"Oh, take me with him—take me with him in the boat!" cried Lucy; "at least take me on shore with him!"

But Mr. Soames thought fit to assume a harshness which, notwithstanding his various faults, was not natural to him. "It's a good

deal better she should be out of the way," he thought; she'll only break her heart if she comes in the midst of it, and finds how it all is. Better the young dog should be safe lodged in the stone pitcher, and her father's burial over, before she gets home, anyhow;" and, therefore, upon these considerations he replied, "No, that can't be permitted, ma'm. You may jest speak a word to him, if you like, before he goes. There can be no harm in that. Stay a minute, captain, there's a good soul. They are new-married people, and this is a hard parting," and he walked towards the door.

"And what am I to do with the girl?" asked the captain in a low voice, following the constable.

"Oh, you must take her over to Havre, and bring her back again if she wants to come," answered Harry Soames. "I'm not going to take her ashore, I can tell you, for many reasons; but he kind to her, there's a good man, for she comes of very good people, and he's a gentleman of high family, although he has played this here trick."

"Are they really married?" asked the captain.

"Ay, that they were, yesterday morning," answered Harry Soames; "I see the gentleman that married them."

In the mean time Lucy had cast her arms round her husband's neck, and given way to the tears she had long repressed. But Alfred Latimer recovered himself sufficiently to whisper, in a quick tone, "Put your hand in my waistcoat pocket, and take out the key of the large trunk—all the money is in it. Go on to Havre, and then come back again if you like, Lucy. But on no account bring that trunk back with you, or anything that it contains, but what money you want. Quick—quick!—don't let them see you."

Lucy did as he bade her; and the moment after Harry Soames said, "Come, I can't give any more time, Mr. Latimer; you must come along."

"Well, I am ready," answered the young man. "Farewell, Lucy!—farewell!" and he kissed her tenderly.

They were obliged to take poor Lucy's arms from his neck before they could lead him to the deck. Alfred Latimer went calmly, though slowly; but as he approached the ship's side the overwhelming impression of the dreadful situation in which he was placed rushed upon his mind more forcibly than it had done before. The horror of being branded and tried as a murderer—the sight of all those whom he had known from his youth gazing upon him with horror, and the agony of a public execution—all seemed to flash upon his mind at once, and he thought anything would be preferable. He was near the ship's side—one of the men had him by the arm to help him down into the boat, and his hands were manacled; but he contrived to dart away, and at one spring cleared the bulwark. A dull splash was heard in the water, and a loud shriek from Lucy, who had followed close behind; but the instant after one of the boatmen exclaimed "I have got him, I have got him. Here he is!" and as they held the lantern over the ship's side they saw two of the men below pulling the wretched culprit into the boat.

"Oh, let me go with him—in pity, in mercy, let me go with him!" cried poor Lucy; but Harry Soames and his companion scrambled down the ship's side without heeding her, and the next moment the boat pushed off, leaving her upon the deck.

"There, go down, go down, my poor young lady," said the captain, in a kindly tone, "go down and sleep. Perhaps they won't be able to prove anything against him after all."

Those were the first words of comfort that Lucy had heard, and, after gazing for a minute in the direction that the boat took, she did go down into the cabin, but not to sleep. Still the captain's words returned to her mind.

"They may not be able to prove anything against him," she repeated to herself, "Oh, no, no, no, I am sure they cannot. Murder! Alfred would never commit murder! Perhaps he has killed somebody in a duel; they call that murder sometimes, but then they are always pardoned, and I am sure he will be."

She gave up her mind, however, to bitterer thoughts when she remembered many of the circumstances that had taken place—the companionship of Williams, the long absence of her husband for a day and two nights, the terrible agitation he had displayed, his haste and eagerness to reach a foreign country, and the sort of dull despair that had fallen upon him when Soames and his companion came on board. "I will return directly," she thought. "I will go back as fast as I can. But where shall I go when I reach Mallington? My father would be angry and not see me, and my mother will not venture to have me there. I will go to Dr. Western; he will be kind, though he may be angry, and he will pity me and help me, I am sure. But I must get back directly. I wonder if they could not land me somewhere as they go."

As soon as this thought struck her she looked forth from the cabin and called the steward, inquiring whether the captain could not put her ashore on the Isle of Wight! The reply, however, was in the negative; and a few minutes after the captain himself came down, saying "I shan't touch anywhere till I get to Havre, ma'am, but I can bring you back the day after to-morrow, if that will do. But I think you had a great deal better lie down, for we shall soon get into rough water."

"The day after to-morrow!" said Lucy. "That is a long time;" but the poor girl had no other resource. Steam-packets in those days did not span the seas as with a flying bridge, and Lucy, after brief deliberation, agreed to the captain's proposal to carry her back again. Then lying down in her berth once more, she turned her face so that no one entering could see her, and gave way to her grief without restraint. Innumerable horrors could be added, if any one so pleased, to the tale, of the sorrows which poor Lucy suffered, and the romance writers of an olden time would have produced a long history of disasters arising—as, indeed, was not improbable—from her having with her a number of things belonging to Alfred Latimer, and, more especially, a large quantity of the gold which had been plundered from Mallington House. She knew nothing of the fact, indeed; but still it was more than likely to have led her

into difficulties and even dangers. But there is nothing so sickening to good taste as the exaggeration of that which is horrible enough in the plain reality. Far from meeting with all the misfortunes that she could meet with, various circumstances combined to prevent many of them from falling upon her. In the first place, Harry Soames, who had never before had the honor of capturing so respectable a prisoner for so capital an offence, what between the hurry and the eagerness of the pursuit, and the confusion and the novelty of boarding the packet at night, forgot those precautions which a more experienced officer of the street called Bow would have taken with the most deliberate coolness, notwithstanding the haste and impatience of the captain, and, as his warrant was directed only against the person of Alfred Latimer, satisfied himself with having obtained possession of that, and neglected to secure his goods, chattels, and effects, which, indeed, might have been of great consequence in proving the case against him. The captain, too, though a quick, sharp man, never troubled his head, according to the happy vulgarism, about the lady's trunks and boxes, and poor Lucy's utter unconsciousness of their importance, and the little heed she took of them, prevented anything like suspicion being aroused. Had they been seized she would have been left nearly penniless in a foreign land, either to die of want, or to find her way back how she could. But they were not seized, and everything was landed quietly on the quay at Havre. One box after another was taken to the Custom House; a few articles of English manufacture were detained as contraband, and all the rest were sent up to the inn, whither she had gone by the captain's recommendation. At that inn we shall now leave her, unconscious of the danger she had run, but with her heart already loaded with fully as much grief as she could bear.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

GREAT was the bustle and confusion in Mallington, even at a late hour of the night on which the notorious Jack Williams and the little less notorious Tom Brown were secured. The inhabitants, the *genii loci*, were sleeping their first sweet sleep; the Crumps and the Martins, the Dixons and the Skinners, were all in the arms of Morpheus; and dear Mrs. Pluckrose pressed the downy pillow, full of unconsciousness, when a loud knocking at the inn door startled her from her fond oblivion. Chambermaids and ostlers were roused in haste, but the knocking continued till they made their appearance at the door; and then messengers were sent off with the utmost rapidity to the house of Mr. Nethersole and to that of Dr. Western, where the knocking recommenced with as much fury as before. All these proceedings not only roused but agitated the inhabitants, and forth from many a window came many a head. The Misses Martin, in curl-papers, and Mrs. Dixon, in her night-cap, were amongst the first to thrust the ornament of their shoulders into the night air; but Mrs. Dixon had the advantage, as the reader is well aware, of lying between the house of Mr. Nethersole and the inn, so that

that excellent lady had the opportunity of calling to the ostler, as he hurried back from the former habitation, and inquiring, in dulcet accents, what was the matter with the Bagpipes.

"Why, ma'am," replied the ostler, "it's a sad business. Mr. Morton has just been brought in badly wounded; but they've got Jack Williams and Tom Brown, as committed the murder, and that's summut."

After giving this account he pursued his way home again, although the Misses Martin screamed after him from the other side of the street, but screamed in vain. They had recourse to all the fictions of imagination to account for the bustle; and, to say sooth, they did some injury to the reputation both of Betsey the chambermaid, and even good Mrs. Pluckrose herself, by their surmises in regard to the cause of this rapid and noisy appeal to the surgeon.

"What could Mr. Nethersole be sent for at such an hour of the night, if it was not to attend one of the women at the inn?" And having established this position as their starting point, they went on with great vigor to calumniate every one in Mallington except themselves, and then fell sound asleep again, with the comfortable reflection that nobody could think worse of their neighbors than they did.

In the meantime Mr. Morton was assisted upstairs, for by this time he was greatly weakened by loss of blood; and having undressed himself with difficulty, stretched himself on the bed, waiting for Mr. Nethersole. But a very few minutes elapsed before that gentleman appeared, half dressed indeed, but having a large case of instruments under his arm, and his assistant at his back. Without asking any questions, and with a very quiet, deferential manner, he proceeded to examine the young gentleman's wound, and probed it to the bottom.

"There's the ball," he said, "there's the ball. That's lucky, we shall easily get at it. I fear, sir, I must put you to a good deal of pain; but it must be extracted immediately, and then we shall easily take up the vessels that have been cut."

"I do not mind the pain," said Mr. Morton. "but you had better get me a glass of wine, for I feel faint."

Mr. Nethersole, as we have said, was a skillful man, very dexterous in manipulation of his tools; and while Mr. Morton had been speaking he had continued apparently probing the wound with a curious-looking instrument somewhat like a pair of curling-irons.

"Get a glass of wine, William," he said; and at the same moment Morton felt a sort of tug, by no means of a pleasant description, but it was followed by instant relief from a sort of burning sensation, which he had felt just between the right shoulder and the chest, somewhat below the clavicle.

"Here it is," said Mr. Nethersole, with a slight degree of triumph in his tone, although it was low and mild; and he held up before Morton's eyes a pistol bullet, which he had drawn from the wound. "All safe, my dear sir," he continued, "no bones injured; and now we will attend to the hemorrhage. Before ten minutes were over, the bleeding had ceased, and Morton felt himself comparatively comfortable when

Dr. Western arrived, with terrible consternation in his face. Good Mrs. Pluckrose, who had been holding the light with Spartan fortitude, now hastened to relieve the mind of the worthy rector, exclaiming, "It's all right now, sir; the bleeding is stopped, and the bullet's out. There it lies upon the table."

But Dr. Western, without examining the implement of evil, advanced quietly to his young friend's bedside, and took his hand quietly in his. "Oh, it's nothing, my dear sir," said Morton; "the loss of blood made me somewhat faint, but that is all the mischief that has been done. I took the liberty of sending for you, because I knew that you were sitting up, and wished you to communicate the fact to Louisa in such a way as would not alarm her. But I was quite sure there was no great injury done, and therefore would not let them call Mr. Quatterly. I dare say I shall be able to get out to-morrow."

Mr. Nethersole shook his head. "Perfect quiet, my dear sir, perfect quiet is absolutely necessary. For three days, at least, I shall not let you quit your bed. The wound certainly is not dangerous, but we never can tell the result of inflammation, and, as you are well aware, some inflammation must come on, even in order to effect the healing process. At present, I would forbid all conversation. It is my invariable rule, where such injuries exist as this, to prevent every sort of excitement, and I have found the most beneficial results. Upon quiet depends your perfect recovery in ten days or a fortnight, or you remain ill for six weeks or two months. You may, therefore, take your choice. We surgeons don't object to a long case, you know; but still conscience, conscience makes us give the patient his option."

"Oh, the shorter time by all means," answered Morton; "and, therefore, I will merely speak a few words to Dr. Western, and bid him good night."

Mr. Nethersole, taking the hint, retired to the other side of the room, wiped his instruments, washed his hands, and conversed a few moments with Mrs. Pluckrose, while Morton requested the clergyman to take every measure for securing the comfort of poor Mrs. Edmonds, and arranging the funeral of her husband, after the coroner's inquest had taken place. Many were the messages, also, which he sent Louisa, beseeching her not to make herself uneasy, but though Dr. Western, from all he saw, was inclined to believe that his young friend was not seriously injured, he well knew that it would be in vain to attempt to relieve Louisa's anxiety till she herself could see him.

Leaving Mr. Nethersole there, resolved to stay all night by his patient, the rector took his way homeward, and retired to rest, thinking he would spare Miss Charlton all knowledge of the events which had taken place as long as possible. But with the very best intentions, and with the very best judgment, we very often produce greater pain to those we love by the means we take to secure them from it. For, unless we could see the intricacies of the heart, we can never tell how to apply the balm to the exact spot where it is required. Louisa had not been deceived by the air of calmness and indifference with which her lover had set out

that night. She saw that he was going upon some expedition of importance, and the very silence which had been maintained in regard to its end and object, had naturally made her suspect that it was of a dangerous character. Sleepless and anxious, therefore, she had lain listening for every sound till the ringing of the bell, and the knocking at the door, and the hurried going out of Dr. Western showed her that some events had taken place, though of what nature she could not tell. Still she lay and listened, but did not hear his return, for he gained admission to the rectory by his own key, and made no noise in retiring to his room. With the earliest light of day Louisa was up, and in less than half an hour afterwards was down in Dr. Western's study. As always happens in such cases, the very tidings which he wished to communicate as gently as possible were told by the housemaid in the most abrupt and exaggerated form. Louisa might, indeed, guess that something had been added to the tale over and above the truth, but still the fact was clear—Morton was wounded; and fear can be as great a magician as hope, although in a sadder way. For a full hour Louisa continued giving way to all the darkest fancies that apprehension could call up; and then, unable to bear the suspense any longer, she hastened to the room of Mrs. Evelyn, and, knocking at the door, craved admission. The tale was soon told, and though the old lady endeavored to soothe her as much as possible, it was evident that she was herself frightened, and, as the best means of satisfying both, she went away, half dressed as she was, to her brother's room.

Dr. Western did not make them wait, for he was already up, and dressed; and, hurrying out, he informed Louisa, kindly and tenderly, but with perfect truth, of the state of the case.

"Morton is certainly hurt, my dear," he said, "but not dangerously. I cannot counsel you not to be grieved for his sufferings, Louisa; but I assure you there is not the slightest cause for apprehension, and you know that I would not say so unless I had good grounds."

"I am perfectly certain of that," replied Louisa; "and your assurance is a great comfort to me; but yet I should be more happy if—do you think there would be any harm or impropriety in my going with you to see him?"

"No, my dear," answered Dr. Western; "circumstanced as you are, and with your guardian at your side, I think there would be none; but there is an objection of another kind. Mr. Nethersole recommends perfect quiet for the next three days. Now, I need not tell you, Louisa, that Morton could not see you without very different emotions from those with which he would receive the surgeon, or the surgeon's assistant. Therefore, I think you had better forbear."

Louisa was very reasonable. "Whatever I may feel," she said, "I will do nothing to protract his illness; but at all events, as I suppose you will go to see him yourself, I may accompany you to the door. That will be some satisfaction."

To this there was no objection, and it was arranged that about the middle of the day, Louisa, Mrs. Evelyn, and the good doctor should go

together to the inn, and thence cross over to Mallington Park, on a visit of consolation to poor Mrs. Edmonds. But before they set out, a message from Mr. Nethersole brought the welcome intelligence that Morton was proceeding perfectly well, and that he wished to see Dr. Western, to which the surgeon assented; and when, after having waited in the carriage for about a quarter of an hour, while the clergyman visited the wounded man, Louisa was again joined by her guardian, she received the still better tidings that her lover was apparently better than the night before; and Dr. Western added, with a smile, "The only danger is, that he seems so well it will be difficult to keep him quiet."

They then drove over the bridge, and up the chief road towards the hall; but just as they were turning off, in the direction of poor Edmonds's cottage, they passed a number of men on foot, conversing together, whom Louisa at once understood to be the coroner's jury. She turned her head away with a slight shudder as the sight brought back to her remembrance all the dreadful details of the crime which had been perpetrated, and her heart sunk as she recollected all the consequences which were to flow from the acts which were then taking place. When she thought of Alfred Latimer—of one brought up in the same house, and nearly connected with herself—of his being brought to trial for so dark and dreadful a deed—of having to appear as a witness against him, to aid in his condemnation, and to know that she had a share, however unwillingly, in working his destruction—when all these circumstances came across her mind, she almost feared that she should never have strength for the task. Then came the thought of his execution, of his mother's agony and rage; and although she felt too sadly convinced that nothing but justice would be done if the severest infliction of the law fell upon his head, yet she could not contemplate such a result without deep and terrible grief, and tried to turn away her eyes from the prospect before her. Such is the power of association upon the human mind, that when habituated to the society, even of those we neither love nor esteem, we cannot help feeling with them in misfortune and grief, even when the consequences of their own errors fall upon them. All seemed dark and gloomy around Louisa Charlton, except the one bright spot where love shone, like the sunshine that sometimes bursts through a stormy sky, and her heart was bitterly depressed enough when they reached the poor park-keeper's cottage, and a new scene of sorrow was presented to her.

Mrs. Evelyn and Louisa were left for nearly two hours with poor Mrs. Edmonds, while Dr. Western went up to the hall to make the various arrangements that were necessary, and to learn the result of the coroner's inquest. On his return he stayed with the poor widow for some time, and thus it was nearly four o'clock when the carriage again drove from the door. The beautiful scenery of the park, as they drove through it, the soft lawns and green turf, the brown wood sweeping round, the glistening river, caught here and there, through the gaps in the trees, were all lighted up by the calm evening sunshine, and, by the aspect of the

great Creator's works in a state of such tranquillity, seemed to offer a sad but monitory contrast in the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to the troublous passions and bitter strifes of man, which had filled the hearts of all around with pain, anxiety, and fear. But one sight more was wanting to make that contrast more complete, and it was to be added before Louisa reached her temporary home. The carriage drove slowly over the bridge; and, at the spot where the roads crossed, was turning to the left towards the rectory, when, suddenly dashing down the hill as fast as four horses could bring it, appeared a post-chaise approaching the inn. Louisa's eyes were turned in that direction, when she naturally gazed at so unusual a sight in the little town of Mallington, but the first object she beheld in the vehicle was Alfred Latimer seated between the constable, Harry Soames, and another man, to whom she was a stranger. The face of her step-mother's son, once florid and healthy, was now as pale as death; and there was something in the position in which he sat, in the straitened and forward posture of the arms, which showed her that his wrists were manacled. His eyes were bent down, so that, though seen, he did not see anything that was passing around; and Louisa drew back in the carriage, and pressed her hand upon her brow. Dr. Western's chariot rolled on without pause, and the fearful sight of one who had called her sister brought past his own door as a captured felon was soon removed from her eyes.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

SEVERAL days passed, and, at the usual hour in the evening, the London coach stopped at the inn in Mallington with a heavier load than it ordinarily brought. The burden, indeed, was not destined to swell even for a time the population of the little town, for, though several passengers jumped down from the outside, and, while some entered the inn and took the refreshment of a glass of ale, others walked up and down as a relief after their cramped position on the roof, only one passenger got out of the inside and gave any indication of an inclination to remain. That one was a lady simply, though nicely dressed; and one box, or rather trunk, which contained her worldly goods, was taken from the boot by the coachman, and set down at the door of the Bagpipes. Mrs. Pluckrose was waiting, as she not uncommonly did, to see what fortune fate would send her by the coach, and, after eyeing the lady for a moment, for her features were not clearly discernible through a thick veil which she wore, she approached with a courtesy, asking if she intended to stay in Mallington.

"I will leave the trunk here, Mrs. Pluckrose," said a voice the good landlady knew right well; "but I must go down to Dr. Western's immediately."

"Dear me, Miss Lucy!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluckrose, who though the veil was not yet removed, instantly recognized her, as I have said, by the voice, "Dear me! is that you? You have come, at a most sad time, Miss Lucy—Mrs. Latimer, I mean to say—I wish you had come at any other time."

Dr. Western arrived, with terrible consternation in his face. Good Mrs. Pluckrose, who had been holding the light with Spartan fortitude, now hastened to relieve the mind of the worthy rector, exclaiming, "It's all right now, sir; the bleeding is stopped, and the bullet's out. There it lies upon the table."

But Dr. Western, without examining the implement of evil, advanced quietly to his young friend's bedside, and took his hand quietly in his. "Oh, it's nothing, my dear sir," said Morton; "the loss of blood made me somewhat faint, but that is all the mischief that has been done. I took the liberty of sending for you, because I knew that you were sitting up, and wished you to communicate the fact to Louisa in such a way as would not alarm her. But I was quite sure there was no great injury done, and therefore would not let them call Mr. Quatterly. I dare say I shall be able to get out to-morrow."

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To this there was no objection, and it was arranged that about the middle of the day, Louisa, Mrs. Evelyn, and the good doctor should go

together to the inn, and thence cross over to Mallington Park, on a visit of consolation to poor Mrs. Edmonds. But before they set out, a message from Mr. Nethersole brought the welcome intelligence that Morton was proceeding perfectly well, and that he wished to see Dr. Western, to which the surgeon assented; and when, after having waited in the carriage for about a quarter of an hour, while the clergyman visited the wounded man, Louisa was again joined by her guardian, she received the still better tidings that her lover was apparently better than the night before; and Dr. Western added, with a smile, "The only danger is, that he seems so well it will be difficult to keep him quiet."

They then drove over the bridge, and up the chief road towards the hall; but just as they were turning off, in the direction of poor Edmonds's cottage, they passed a number of men on foot, conversing together, whom Louisa at once understood to be the coroner's jury. She turned her head away with a slight shudder as the sight brought back to her remembrance all the dreadful details of the crime which had been perpetrated, and her heart sunk as she recollected all the consequences which were to flow from the acts which were then taking place. When she thought of Alfred Latimer—of one brought up in the same house, and nearly connected with herself—of his being brought to trial for so dark and dreadful a deed—of having to appear as a witness against him, to aid in his condemnation, and to know that she had a share, however unwillingly, in working his destruction—when all these circumstances came across her mind, she almost feared that she should never have strength for the task. Then came the thought of his execution, of his mother's agony and rage; and although she felt too sadly convinced that nothing but justice would be done if the severest infliction of the law fell upon his head, yet she could not contemplate such a result without deep and terrible grief, and tried to turn away her eyes from the prospect before her. Such is the power of association upon the human mind, that when habituated to the society, even of those we neither love nor esteem, we cannot help feeling with them in misfortune and grief, even when the consequences of their own errors fall upon them. All seemed dark and gloomy around Louisa Charlton, except the one bright spot where love shone, like the sunshine that sometimes bursts through a stormy sky, and her heart was bitterly depressed enough when they reached the poor park-keeper's cottage, and a new scene of sorrow was presented to her.

Mrs. Evelyn and Louisa were left for nearly two hours with poor Mrs. Edmonds, while Dr. Western went up to the hall to make the various arrangements that were necessary, and to learn the result of the coroner's inquest. On his return he stayed with the poor widow for some time, and thus it was nearly four o'clock when the carriage again drove from the door. The beautiful scenery of the park, as they drove through it, the soft lawns and green turf, the brown wood sweeping round, the glistening river, caught here and there, through the gaps in the trees, were all lighted up by the calm evening sunshine, and, by the aspect of the

great Creator's works in a state of such tranquillity, seemed to offer a sad but monitory contrast in the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, to the troublous passions and bitter strifes of man, which had filled the hearts of all around with pain, anxiety, and fear. But one sight more was wanting to make that contrast more complete, and it was to be added before Louisa reached her temporary home. The carriage drove slowly over the bridge; and, at the spot where the roads crossed, was turning to the left towards the rectory, when, suddenly dashing down the hill as fast as four horses could bring it, appeared a post-chaise approaching the inn. Louisa's eyes were turned in that direction, when she naturally gazed at so unusual a sight in the little town of Mallington, but the first object she beheld in the vehicle was Alfred Latimer seated between the constable, Harry Soames, and another man, to whom she was a stranger. The face of her step-mother's son, once florid and healthy, was now as pale as death; and there was something in the position in which he sat, in the straitened and forward posture of the arms, which showed her that his wrists were manacled. His eyes were bent down, so that, though seen, he did not see anything that was passing around; and Louisa drew back in the carriage, and pressed her hand upon her brow. Dr. Western's chariot rolled on without pause, and the fearful sight of one who had called her sister brought past his own door as a captured felon was soon removed from her eyes.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

SEVERAL days passed, and, at the usual hour in the evening, the London coach stopped at the inn in Mallington with a heavier load than it ordinarily brought. The burden, indeed, was not destined to swell even for a time the population of the little town, for, though several passengers jumped down from the outside, and, while some entered the inn and took the refreshment of a glass of ale, others walked up and down as a relief after their cramped position on the roof, only one passenger got out of the inside and gave any indication of an inclination to remain. That one was a lady simply, though nicely dressed; and one box, or rather trunk, which contained her worldly goods, was taken from the boot by the coachman, and set down at the door of the Bagpipes. Mrs. Pluckrose was waiting, as she not uncommonly did, to see what fortune fate would send her by the coach, and, after eyeing the lady for a moment, for her features were not clearly discernible through a thick veil which she wore, she approached with a courtesy, asking if she intended to stay in Mallington.

"I will leave the trunk here, Mrs. Pluckrose," said a voice the good landlady knew right well; "but I must go down to Dr. Western's immediately."

"Dear me, Miss Lucy!" exclaimed Mrs. Pluckrose, who though the veil was not yet removed, instantly recognized her, as I have said, by the voice, "Dear me! is that you! You have come, at a most odd time, Miss Lucy—Mrs. Latimer, I mean to say—I wish you had come at any other time."

"I know it is a sad time," answered Lucy, "I know it too well, Mrs. Pluckrose; but, nevertheless, I must go down to Dr. Western's directly."

"Oh, don't go there just now, ma'am!" rejoined the worthy landlady. "Don't go there just now, my dear child—or, at all events, stop a little here. Come into my parlor, there you can be quite quiet and private."

"No, no!" answered Lucy Edmonds; "I must not stop for anything. Only just take care of my trunk till I know where I can lie, Mrs. Pluckrose; I am determined to do just what Dr. Western tells me; and wherever he tells me I ought to go, there I will go."

"Well, that's right—that's very right!" answered Mrs. Pluckrose; "but yet, my dear! I wish you would wait here for a little."

Before Lucy could answer, the coachman came up, with his bill in his hand, saying, "Four-and-twenty shillings, if you please, ma'am;" and the landlady was called away to reckon with one of the travelers, who was about to proceed.

Lucy paid the money, received the admonition to "remember the coachman" with due attention, and then crossing over the way, followed the road by the river bank towards the rectory. Her steps were wavering and uncertain—her eyes bent upon the ground, and, to tell the truth, they were filled with tears, for every painful memory of the past, and every dark anticipation of the future, rose up before her, as she proceeded through the scenes of her early days, with none to welcome her, with none to offer one kindly word, or greet the wanderer's return with an embrace. From time to time she looked around, as if fearful that some one should see her whom she had formerly known. She dreaded to meet her father's eyes, little dreaming that those eyes were covered with the shroud. Even the mother who had so loved her—who had always been so tender and so kind—she would fain have shunned, little knowing that that mother was standing by a husband's grave on the road directly before.

When she had advanced about a quarter of a mile, she saw a lady and a gentleman coming slowly towards her, the latter very pale, and apparently languid and ill; the former with her eyes anxiously turned towards his countenance, and her hand resting very lightly on his arm. Lucy instantly recognized Miss Charlton and Mr. Morton, but she could not make up her mind to speak to them; and, anxious to avoid their notice, though she might have passed safely under the thick veil which she wore, she crossed the little bit of green sward which lay between the road and the river, and gazed upon the passing waters, as if some secret treasure lay hidden at the bottom of their course.

When they had passed by, she resumed her walk, and was approaching the rectory, when she caught a sight of Dr. Western's figure coming by a private gate from the church-yard into his own grounds. But upon the open road, before the rectory, there was another sight—two undertakers, in black, were leading the way from the churchyard before a long string of other persons, with all the signs of deep mourning in their apparel and demeanor, who seemed to have been attending a funeral. Lucy hurried

forward, in the hope of avoiding them, by the gates which led into the garden of the rectory; but just as she did so, her eye fell upon the form of a young boy, walking beside a woman, whose face was buried in her handkerchief. They were the two first of the sad procession, the principal mourners, and in the one Lucy recognized her brother. Who was the other! The poor girl eyed her with a sinking dread at her heart, which made her whole frame tremble. The woman withdrew her handkerchief for a moment from her streaming eyes to speak a word or two with the boy, and Lucy beheld her mother!

A part of the truth—happily, only a part—flashed instantly upon her mind. Her father was dead! She accused herself of killing him; and, giving way to the sudden impulse of grief and love, she darted forward towards her mother; but ere she reached her, all the exhaustion that a week of agonizing suspense had produced, the weariness of traveling, the lassitude of long endured grief, overpowered her corporeal energies; she felt an indescribable sick faintness spread over her whole frame, the objects swam before her eyes, her brain seemed to turn round, and she sank senseless at her mother's feet.

It needed not the sight of her face to show her mother who she was; and Mrs. Edmonds stooped tenderly over her while one of the men who had followed the body of the poor park-keeper to the tomb lifted the unhappy girl in his arms. There was no look of reproach upon the widow's countenance—there was no reproachful feeling in her heart. She knew well that the grief and agony of her child when she came to learn the whole, would be far more than sufficient punishment for any fault she had committed, although Mrs. Edmonds was not aware of how much there was to palliate Lucy's conduct, or that she was rather the victim than the offender. While she was thus bending over her, with all a mother's feelings strong in her heart, and while Lucy's brother was rubbing her hand, and gazing at the same time at the wedding-ring upon her finger, the voice of Dr. Western (who had been drawn to the spot by the sudden halt of the funeral party, and the little bustle that succeeded) was heard from within the garden fence, desiring that Lucy might be brought into his house.

This was soon done; and under Mrs. Evelyn's kind management the poor girl was speedily restored to consciousness; but as soon as Dr. Western saw the returning color appear in her cheek he took her mother into the adjoining room, and urged upon her the necessity of concealing from her daughter as long as possible the awful facts of which she herself had become by this time aware. Mrs. Edmonds would willingly enough have yielded to the good rector's advice, but she started a difficulty which he had not foreseen, for she knew her daughter better than he did.

"I will do anything you tell me, sir," answered the widow, in her humble manner, "but I can't help thinking my poor girl is suffering worse than she would do if she knew the whole truth. She fancies, sir, that it has been her going away that killed her father. I could see it in a minute, sir, and if you will ask her, you will find it so."

"Such may be the case, indeed," answered Dr. Western; "but we will ascertain the fact, and act accordingly. Let me speak with her first, Mrs. Edmonds;" and returning to the library, where Lucy still lay upon the sofa, though now much recovered, he sat down by her, while her mother held her hand, and kissed it.

"You are all very kind to me," said poor Lucy, "much kinder than I have deserved; and yet, indeed, indeed, if you knew all, you would see I am not so much to blame as you think. Oh! my poor father, if he could but have known"—and she burst into tears.

"Lucy, my dear child," said Dr. Western, "we have no cause to think that he believed you so much to blame as you suppose he did—at least after his first anger was over. Doubtless, he would have been easily brought to forgive you, especially when he heard of your marriage, had not this fatal accident deprived us of him."

"A fatal accident!" exclaimed Lucy; "then it was not my doing—a fatal accident!"

"Yes, my dear child," replied the rector; "he met his death by violence, it would seem; but as yet we know not the full particulars."

"By violence!" cried Lucy, raising herself, deadly pale, and gazing in the clergyman's face. "By violence!—and my husband—Oh heaven!—my husband!—violence!—murder!"—and she fell back again, as if life had utterly departed.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

It is extraordinary how near we are in point of time to barbarism—how very lately we have emerged from a state which in many particulars was worse than that of the savage tribes which roamed the forests. Not three quarters of a century have passed since scenes daily took place within this island which, if recorded by a modern writer, would not be believed by the great majority of his contemporaries; and of all the curious histories that could be written, perhaps the most curious would be the history of prison discipline in this realm of England. It is no longer ago than the days of our fathers that in all great prisons a system of inconceivable licence reigned within the walls of the jail, and every excess and every vice that the corrupt heart of man can devise was not only tolerated, but actually encouraged, by those who conceived their only charge and only duty to be the safe custody of those accused of, or condemned for crimes. Though the judges on the bench might be pure and upright, the magistracy were corrupt and profligate, the whole system of police vicious, and the men and women awaiting the sentence of the law, or its execution, were not only suffered to mingle together without restraint or supervision, but were supplied, as long as they had money to pay for it, with everything that could drown thought, or stimulate the passions. We have long since gone into the opposite extreme. Brutal harshness and severe infliction are now the consequences of mere suspicion; solitude and close confinement, deprivation and rigor are awarded to the accused, with even a less sparing hand than to the guilty and condemned,

and the English jail is, in many respects, modeled upon the prisons of the Inquisition. The cause of both these extremes is the same—the want of fixed principles in legislation and civil polity, which want will always, according to the tone of the day, produce either laxity and corruption in practice, or severity and injustice, springing from cold and unsubstantial theories. It is a great fundamental principle of all law that every man should be supposed innocent till he is proved to be guilty; and if such be the case, those who treat him as if he were not so, before proof, are deeply guilty themselves. It may be a necessary evil, that a man accused, should be for a certain time deprived of his liberty, and it may even be granted that it is scarcely possible that the country should make him compensation for the injury inflicted, if the charge be not established; but there is no excuse whatever for depriving him of aught but liberty till he be condemned. To deprive him of his freedom at all, is a wrong, if he be innocent, to inflict anything else upon him is a crime; and who can doubt that to subject an untried prisoner to silence, solitude, the loss of all companionships, of the consolations of friendship and of love, to the deprivation of all accustomed amusements and healthful exercise, of the comforts of his station, of even the luxuries that have become necessities, and to confine him in silence and in secrecy, numbered and clothed like a galley-slave, for months, for weeks, or even for a day, is one of the grossest iniquities, one of the darkest political crimes that an age of theoretical cruelty has yet produced. Not less evil, and not less unjust, was the system which sent every suspected person, innocent or guilty, young or old, confirmed in crime or trembling on the brink of the great moral precipice, to herd with felons, to share their orgies, and to be driven by the lash of continual scorn and ill-treatment to take part in vices and excesses which many of them, on entering those doors, shrunk from with horror. Yet such was the custom some seventy or eighty years ago, and it is well known to every one that the horrors of the bagnio, the gambling-house, and the gin-shop, seemed all concentrated within the criminal prisons of England. But between these two extremes there is a mean, but that mean is, unfortunately, what men never seek, and which is seldom arrived at in the natural course of events. Thus, at the period to which our tale refers, which is nearly midway between the present epoch of iniquitous severity and that former time of careless and demoralizing laxity which I have mentioned although some of the evils which had preceded had been done away, many still remained to be removed; and although we had not yet adopted all the harshness of the present times, a good many unnecessary inflictions were sometimes endured by the prisoner. All was, in fact, irregular; and in that state of transition, had any wise and good man stood forward to propose a reasonable system of prison discipline, it probably might have been adopted. We might then have seen some classification of prisoners before trial—a classification easily devised, and which would have been most beneficial in its results. We might have seen those persons accused before a magistrate for the first time, kept apart from

those who had been accused more than once; those who had been accused more than once of offences within the summary jurisdiction of the justice, separated from those who had been actually convicted. We might have seen those persons who had been convicted of minor offences by a magistrate, divided from those who had been convicted of graver crimes by a jury; and many another distinction might form the limits of different classes, remembering always that accumulated causes for suspicion, vouched by the authentic records of different courts, must always naturally justify, to a certain extent, the presupposition of guilt, and greater strictness of confinement.

This is all very dull, dear reader; and, though not unimportant, is, perhaps, not profitable. I will, therefore, go on with my tale, from which I have been somewhat led astray, when I set out, at the beginning of this chapter, simply with the purpose of giving some notion of the state of the prison at Sturton, in which Alfred Latimer, with his two companions in crime, Williams and Brown, were now confined. A good deal of laxity existed. The prisoners were allowed to purchase anything they thought fit, if the governor of the prison did not judge it dangerous. They were suffered to walk out in the yard, to converse together, to arrange any plans they might think fit, and to see any one who might come to visit them, favored by a magistrate's order, on the governor's caprice. The three persons I have named, all charged with the same crime, and committed very nearly upon the same evidence, were, nevertheless, very differently dealt with. Alfred Latimer, undoubtedly the most criminal of the three, knew little of the rigors of imprisonment but the name. He was a young gentleman, and was treated in a very gentlemanly manner indeed. He had a comfortable room in the governor's own lodging, a well-furnished table, wine at will, books to read, paper to write, and occasionally a game at piquet with another favored culprit committed to the same jail. When he walked out in the yard, no clanking irons announced the felon; and had it not been for the downcast look and gloomy brow, the quivering lip and the abstracted air, one might have supposed him a visitor, brought by curiosity to examine the interior of the jail.

Neither was Williams manacled, though the desperate resistance he had made when he was taken, and the wound he had inflicted upon Mr. Morton, might have well justified such a precaution. But since his confinement he had shown himself perfectly calm, tranquil, and obedient. His resistance, in the first instance, he shrewdly explained away, saying that, suddenly startled out of his sleep, after a long and fatiguing walk, he did not know what his captors wanted, and expressing great and apparently sincere regret that he had hurt the young gentleman, who, he added, had always been very civil to him. He frequently asked after his health, and seemed well pleased to hear that he was recovering rapidly, displaying a great wish to see him, and ask his pardon for having wounded him.

Tom Brown, on the contrary, never appeared without being accoutred with what he himself called the "darbies;" but, to say truth, he had

given cause for this severity, having knocked down and nearly murdered one of the turnkeys two days after his committal. He thought himself very ill-used, indeed, when walking out in the yard, he found Williams left to the free use of his limbs; and a feeling of rancor was generated in his bosom by the distinction which did not fail to bear fruit in time. The most brutal of human beings, however, have generally a sort of animal cunning about them which serves instead of reason, and he took care not to show his companion what he felt, but would walk up and down with him, conversing in a low and grumbling tone, and trying to concoct a scheme of defence which would harmonize with the evidence which they knew had been brought forward against them.

For several days after their committal Alfred Latimer did not appear in the yard at the same time with themselves, and at first Williams concluded that he had effected his escape, expressing to Brown some satisfaction that such was the case. Brown gave no answer but by a savage laugh; and as secrets will find their way out even in a prison, they soon found that their comrade in crime was within the same walls.

Williams accounted for his non-appearance by the supposition that he was purposely kept apart from them by the authorities of the prison, which, as the management of unconvicted prisoners at that time greatly depended on caprice, was not at all improbable. But the facts of the case were very different. Alfred Latimer, on his committal, had affected to desire no communication with the persons under the same charge with himself, and had requested, as a favor, to be allowed to walk in the yard at a different hour from that assigned to them. He said, and said truly, though not for the purpose of truth, that his acquaintance with Williams, and having suffered himself to be led into several wild adventures by that man, had been the cause of all the evil that had befallen him; and he added that he wished for no more of his society. But very speedily a change came over his views after speaking in private with a shrewd solicitor who had been brought from London to prepare his defence. He then saw that the evidence of Maltby, which clearly established the fact of his having been in company with Williams and Brown, would require a combination of measures with them, and he thenceforward became as anxious to speak with them as he had before been desirous of disclaiming any connection with them at the period when the offence took place. He so contrived it the next day that at the hour assigned for his own walk he was apparently busy in drawing up notes and memoranda for his lawyer; and afterwards, at the hour when he knew that they would be in the yard, he pretended to be suffering from headache, and requested to be permitted to take some exercise. The governor informed him in reply, that the two men Williams and Brown were then out; but Alfred Latimer affected a tone of indifference, answering, "Oh, I don't care for meeting them—I am not afraid to meet anybody;" and having obtained leave, he went forth.

There were several people in the yard besides the turnkey who was watching them at the door; and the young gentleman, on first enter-

ing, had to abide all the insults and annoyances which usually await a new prisoner on first mingling with his fellow-captives. A few pieces of money, however, for beer and gin, which were unceremoniously demanded to make him free of the worshipful company into which he now entered, soon delivered him from the most importunate, though not without encountering many of those stinging sarcasms which are so rife amongst the vicious when all the restraints of fear and risk are taken away. As soon as he could free himself he crossed over direct towards Williams, who was pacing up and down the yard with Brown, as if keeping watch on the deck of a ship; and, after a slight hesitation, he shook hands with him, and entered into conversation with him as they walked. They could pursue no topic long and uninterruptedly, for many of their fellow-prisoners either crossed them, or came up for the express purpose of teasing the new-comer, but from time to time they spoke of the subject that was naturally uppermost in the thoughts of each, though in low tones, and with anxious looks around.

"I don't think it will do, Mr Latimer," said Williams, in reply to some observation of the other; "I think they have got us tight, whichever way we turn, unless they break down at the indictment. You see that cowardly black-guard Maltby has sworn that he saw us all together on the very night that we came over the river, just after the time when the thing was done. Then, there's that unfortunate job of your bloody clothes being found, and a dozen other things will come out besides, if they haven't come out already; no, there's nothing for it," he added, "but to get out of this place, if we can. I've a scheme on hand, which would be easy enough done, if it weren't for these irons on Brown; but we'll talk about it to-morrow, for it will soon be shutting-up time."

Alfred Latimer returned to the room in which he was confined more gloomy than he had been since he had entered those walls. Hitherto his mind had found occupation in devising schemes for his defence, and he had buoyed himself up with hopes that all the criminalizing circumstances which had been proved against him might be explained away. But the more firm and reasonable view which Williams took of the case had undermined all such expectations, and he sat down to contemplate his probable fate in horror and despair.

I will not recapitulate all the dark images that fancy called up before him, but only say that there he sat for more than one hour, with the thought of a dreadful death before him. The chance of escape from the walls of the prison seemed so faint that it gave him no relief. He looked upon it merely as a thing to be justified by despair, and he gazed trembling on into the future, tasting all the bitter fruits of crime.

While he thus pondered and thought, the shades of night began to fall, and the faint light and the gray and gloomy sky, which he saw through the barred windows of the jail, harmonized sadly with the sensations in his own bosom. Was there yet penitence? was there yet the repentance which is not to be repented of? Alas, no! there was fear, despair, and bitterness of heart; but his character

was not changed; it was such as we have always represented it. Vanity, in some shape, is at the bottom of one-half the crime and three-quarters of the madness of the earth, and it is a bar to all repentance. Still, still, Alfred Latimer cast the blame on every one else but himself. He fancied he had been driven to crime, step by step, by others. Every one he knew—every one who had any share in his education, or any control over his conduct, came in for their part of the charge which he brought against the whole world but himself. One had not given him aid when it was needful—one had irritated him in youth till he had been driven to low companionship; another had been over indulgent; another had been too severe; and he hated them all with that intense and violent passion which had led him on from act to act in the dark and fearful course he had pursued. No, oh, no! there was nothing like repentance in his spirit; but let it be remarked, I have not said that there was no remorse, but that is a very different sensation. When he thought of the dreadful act he had committed—when imagination brought up before his eyes the form of poor Edmonds, weltering in his gore, it seemed as if a scorching and a seething flame passed through his heart and brain—not withering, not consuming, but inflicting agony indescribable. As far as he could command his own mind, he shut out all such images. He said to himself, "The deed is done—it cannot be undone; I will think of it no more." He called it weakness, folly, indecision. He resolved to think upon the future, to struggle with the past. But the fatal past—the dark, the certain, the irretrievable—the only thing fixed, permanent, unchanging, unchangeable—still held him in its adamant grasp, and, like a chained bird, when his mind had fluttered away for a short distance, and fancied itself free, it was still brought back to the stake, and found itself bound down to horrors that could never be cast off. At night, too, in darkness and solitude, when every sound was still, and every sight removed, and the spirit left alone to deal with the things within itself, the oppressive burden of the heart was felt in all its weight, and the grievous load of sin pressed down every hope, and extinguished every light. It seemed as if a gloomy curtain was drawn round between him and all external things, leaving nought within that sad and solemn arched but himself and his fearful crime. The spirit of the dead, whom his hand had slain, rose up as if to reproach him for the past, and to tell him, with the prophetic tongue of the future—the future not of this world alone, but of another—the interminable future, with all its store of agony, to which the temporary suffering of the gibbet and the cord was but an idle nothing. He thought of standing face to face, before the throne of God, with him whom he had murdered. He thought of the comparison that must then be drawn between the life of the victim and that of the slayer. He thought of taking his place amongst those who had spilt man's blood, from Cain down to the last crime, and of being driven before the face of the assembled universe into the place of endless punishment! He felt that the agony of hell had already

begun; he felt, too, that it could never end, for something told him that remorse must be eternal—that the crime, and its memory, and its woe, could never, never be swept away—that the worm that dieth not was within him, the flame that cannot be quenched in his heart. But yet, if it be asked, did these awful impressions give an inclination to do better, did they teach him to submit, to resign himself to Heaven's will, to make atonement? I must answer, no. Far, very far from it, his whole feeling seemed embittered towards every one that was better than himself. By a strange and indescribable and almost unaccountable perversion of feeling, the very agony of remorse that he suffered seemed to him an injury; and to cast it off, to drown it I may say, he was ready, in the impetuous irritation of his pride, to commit any other crime, as if in the hope of doing away the bitter impression of the first by familiarizing himself with the guilt of many more. In some sense he said to himself, like the fallen seraph, "Evil, be thou my good."

Such thoughts and feelings were crowding upon him fast on the evening of which we have been speaking, while the shades of night drew a dim veil over the sky, and the light within his room faded gradually away. He would have fain fled from them, he would have read or written, or done anything to escape, and he grew angry and furious that they had not brought him lights, as they usually did about that hour. At length, however, he heard the bolts withdrawn, and the door unlocked, and the next instant the governor himself entered with the turnkey, who bore the candles.

"Your mother, sir," said the officer, "is in my room, wishing to see you. I don't know any reason why she should not. The magistrates have given me no directions. So, if you like to see her you can."

To the governor's surprise, and it must be added to his horror, Alfred Latimer's first exclamation was, "Curse her! she has done me more mischief than any one else. If it had not been for her I should not have been here. I don't want to see her. I should like to see my wife, indeed, but I don't care about this woman."

The governor was turning away in some disgust, and without reply, but then the hardened villain seemed to think better of it, and exclaimed, "Well, never mind, let her come in, she may as well see what a terrible state she has brought me to;" and in a minute or two after Mrs. Charlton entered, supported by the governor.

I will not pause upon the first part of the scene that ensued, for it is too horrible to be dwelt upon. Bitter, horrible, and impious invectives were all that the mother heard from the lips of her son; and strong as was the spirit of Mrs. Charlton herself, it was completely cowed under his wild and outrageous violence. She strove to pacify him, to soothe him, and, with her usual skill, she soon divined that the only means of doing so was by holding out hopes. That quieted him a little; and when she went on to speak of the means to be taken for his defence, he listened sullenly, and answered from time to time, in few words, and in a bitter tone. His mind was led on, how-

ever, by several things she said, to think over some cunning schemes for evading the grasp of the law. Neither mother nor son for one instant took into consideration the truth or falsehood, the justice or the iniquity, the right or the wrong of anything they proposed to say or do. To save him from an ignominious death, by any means, was all that they considered. Mrs. Charlton never inquired whether he was innocent or guilty—the truth was, in her own heart, that question was by this time settled; but after suggesting several schemes, all of which presented some insurmountable objection, she said, in a low tone, "Don't you think I could bribe some of the jury? Three or four thousand pounds would tempt any common man to do more than that."

"How the devil will you know who the jury are till the very day!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer; but then, a moment after, he said, "Stay, stay! I have thought of something, perhaps you could bribe the fellow who draws up the indictment—the Clerk of the Arraignment I believe he is called—to put in a flaw, and that would be sure work. But it will take a great sum, depend upon it. You must not offer him less than five or ten thousand pounds!"

"But where am I to get it?" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton. "If I were to sell all my jewels and plate they would not produce more than four thousand."

"You must get it from Morton!" said her son; "he will give treble that, I am sure, to marry Louisa."

"He won't—he won't!" cried Mrs. Charlton; "I tried that before all this happened. He is as proud and haughty as Lucifer, and will not enter into any bargain whatever. If he would not do it then, I am sure he will not do it now."

"You must try!" replied Alfred Latimer, doggedly; "or see me hanged—that's all. I don't suppose you care much about that, on my account; still, you won't like to have it said that your son died on a gibbet, for that would not suit your own purposes. So you must try; and if you can't get him to do it any other way, set Louisa to ask him. He will do it for her, if not for you, for I suppose you have quarrelled with him by this time."

"Quarrelled with him!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton. "I hate him, I abhor him. He treated me with cool and shameless insolence, and, for my own part, I would rather die than ask him anything. Oh! if I have to give my consent that that saucy girl shall marry this conceited, mercenary upstart, it will break my heart—it is well nigh broken already."

"No fear of it," answered her worthy son; "it's tough enough, or else you wouldn't hesitate when your son's life is at stake. I dare say you think that under your new name of Charlton it will never be known that the accused person is your son; but I'll take care of that, for I'll call you as a witness at the trial, and have the whole story in my last dying speech and confession, that you may have it hawked about under your windows for a penny—ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed bitterly.

"Do not, do not—for heaven's sake, do not, Alfred!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, wringing her hands; "you know I would do anything

for you—I will do even this, let it cost what it may. The girl will surely never refuse me; but I will try him first. If I could but drive them," she continued, in a lower tone, after pausing, and thinking for a moment—"if I could but drive them to a sudden marriage, without my consent, then the whole property would be mine, and I could give any sum I liked to the Clerk of the Arraignment, or whoever the man is."

"That's all nonsense," answered Alfred Latimer, "there's no time for such manoeuvres. The assizes are to be held in ten days, and it will take you a year to bring about what you want. You always talk as if you and I were to live forever. Better take what you can get at once, and drive a bargain with Morton. He's a very good fellow, in spite of all you may say, and gave me help once before, when you wouldn't."

"I could not, Alfred, I could not," answered his mother. "You know very well I had not the means."

"I know nothing of the kind," said her son, harshly; "and all I now know is, that your son will be hanged if you don't do as I tell you. So you can finish the work you have begun; if you like. And after having contrived to bring me here, can go on, and take me to the gallows; but I shall say there, and tell everybody that it is all your doing."

"My doing!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton; "what had I to do with it?"

"Oh! a great many things," answered her son; "education and example, too. I know a good deal that there is no use talking about now; but it shall all come out, by-and-by, if my mind is not made easy."

He spoke in a threatening tone, and his mother was profoundly silent.

Now the reader is well aware that Mrs. Charlton was not usually embarrassed with any very fine feeling; yet she might be, and, doubtless was, shocked at the cold heartlessness of her son. But there were other causes for the emotion that she felt, which was great. Let every one arm himself in the triple braas of selfishness, as strongly as he will—let him dip himself in the Styx of the most profound egotism—there will still, as in the fabled hero of the "Iliad," be some vulnerable point by which the arrows even of a weak and inexperienced hand may reach some vital part, and render every precaution vain. The consciousness, too, that there is such a weak spot about us must make the persons thus carefully, but insufficiently guarded, always the more fearful lest others should discover the assailable point. My belief is, that a man would go into battle more boldly naked, without shield or buckler, than one who knew that in his armor there was a flaw.

Now, Mrs. Charlton knew that all in her schemes there was a vulnerable point, and though, perhaps, selfishness might have so far predominated as to induce her to leave her dearly-beloved son to his fate rather than sacrifice any of her comforts or her future prospects; yet there was something in his words and in his tone that alarmed her, and made her resolve to submit to the greatest sacrifice to save him. I do not mean to say that she had

any inclination to see him hanged, though there are mothers on record who have indulged in such a desire. Far from it; she would have done a great deal to deliver him from his perilous situation, and herself from the shame of having a son in such a position. But, nevertheless, it may be doubted whether maternal love and tenderness would at once have settled the question, if fear had not had something to do with it. After an instant she replied, however, "I do not know what you mean, Alfred, and I certainly do think you very ungrateful. But that does not matter; I will do all that you wish, all that I can, to deliver you. I will sacrifice even my just resentment, and condescend to see this man. I will even sue to an ungrateful girl, who, forgetful of all the benefits I have conferred upon her youth, now turns upon one who has been more than a mother to her, I am sure; and if I fail there I will contrive, notwithstanding, to raise the money in some way to save my son. I will sell everything—I will even pledge my income, and live in penury, if he too will not show himself ungrateful."

"Ay, come now, that is something like!" answered Alfred Latimer; and, after some further conversation in regard to the means and the agent to be employed in this scheme for frustrating the ends of justice, the mother and her son parted apparently better friends than they had met. Alfred Latimer remained revolving a new plan which had occurred to his mind for making all doubly sure, and preparing such a defence as would meet all the evidence against him; but Mrs. Charlton, entering her carriage, rolled away towards Mallington with thoughts which would not have been very pleasing to him if he could have seen into her heart. "I will do the best I can for him," she thought, "but if I do not succeed, I must, at all events, make him think that everything is arranged; for there is no knowing what he might say in one of his wild passions if he were driven to despair." Self, self, was ever uppermost in her thoughts, whatever were the circumstances in which she was placed, and not even maternal affection could act pure and unmingled. All was affected still by the great ruling principle of her nature.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

As Mrs. Charlton's carriage rolled somewhat slowly on its way homeward, a post-chaise passed her going in the same direction. Had she known who was the tenant of Mrs. Pluckrose's rumbling vehicle, she might have felt inclined to stop it; but as she did not, and the chaise rattled on, with the position bobbing up and down like one of the dampers of a piano, we will not exactly follow it, but rather precede it to the place of its destination.

The human mind has a marvelous and very pleasant power, as the reader knows, of adapting itself to circumstances. Were sorrows and misfortunes to retain the same intense effect, even while they themselves endure, the corporeal frame, if not the mental powers themselves, would give way under the continued pressure; and did the memory of each grief remain unimpaired, the accumulation in any one man's short career would abridge life or destroy

reason. Memory, however, is but a painter of the past, and though the canvass will in some cases retain the lines and hues much longer than in others, yet she always uses fading colors, which lose part of their brightness even while she is laying them on. The grief—I might, indeed, call it the gloom, for with grief there was something besides grief—which had spread over the little party at the rectory, in consequence of the dark and terrible events which we have lately recorded, had passed in a degree away. Cheerfulness had to a certain extent returned, and the feelings of all were at that point where amusement of any quiet and tranquil kind is sought by the mind to relieve it from the painful consciousness not only of the sad things gone, but of others that are to come. Gaiety, indeed, was yet far away, and with Louisa Charlton, perhaps, could never wholly return. The lightness of heart that finds beauty and rejoicing in everything, the bloom of life's fresh fruit, can never be long preserved; for though the knowledge of good may and must be the source of the purest happiness, the knowledge of evil combined inseparably in the fatal apple, is death to the warm and happy confidence of innocence. Nevertheless, Louisa had shaken off the deeper depression, and following the example of good Dr. Western, would suffer her mind to dwell neither upon the gloomy and terrible events which had lately taken place, nor upon those which were soon to follow. They would come rushing upon imagination indeed, from time to time, whether she would or not, and cast a dark but temporary shadow on all around. But still there was light beyond the cloud, and hope having good ground to rest upon, waved her on into the sunshine of coming years when the storm should have passed by.

The worthy rector had dined somewhat later than ordinary, and he, his sister, and their fair guest were still sitting round the table, evidently waiting for some one who was expected, but who did not come. Louisa seemed somewhat uneasy, and her kind old friend jested with her on apprehensions without a cause.

"Well, perhaps it is foolish, and perhaps it is wrong," answered Louisa, "but I am afraid it is natural too, when we have seen such terrible and unexpected things take place, to lose, as it were, our confidence in the future, and never see a friend depart from us without asking ourselves shall we ever behold him again! Will he be safe, well, uninjured where he is going?"

"Is not that something very like losing our confidence in God?" asked Dr. Western, in a graver tone. "If, my dear child, it is our duty to bear any griefs or adversities that he may send us with tranquil submission to his will, depend upon it that it is no less a duty which we should inculcate and practice to look forward to all his dealings towards us with trust and hope in the full knowledge of his goodness and mercy. One of the best and most beautiful exemplifications of faith in ordinary life is the serenity with which a good man waits for the future developments of God's will. We have no right to anticipate one evil, except as a consequence of our own bad acts; and he who has a conscience clear of offence may well feel sure

that if adversity do befall him, it will prove ultimately a benefit rather than an infliction. I know, my dear child," he continued, seeing a shade come over Louisa's countenance, "that the flesh is weak, however willing the spirit may be, and I but wished to furnish you with some motives to guard you against the very natural apprehensions which first misfortunes generally produce in young and enthusiastic minds. In the present instance, however, you have no probable cause for fear, and I will not have you cultivate unreasonable terrors. Some people are constitutionally more brave than others, but depend upon it the highest point and the highest quality of courage is afforded by true faith. Who can be, who ought to be afraid of anything, when he knows that an Almighty arm shields and supports him?"

"Well," said Mrs. Evelyn, who did not take quite so high a view as her brother, and was anxious to cheer Louisa by more human means, "there can be no danger to Mr. Morton in this case, and here I think he comes, to show that no evil has happened."

The sound of wheels grating through the gravel was heard as she spoke, and in another minute Morton himself appeared. He was still pale and somewhat languid from his wound, but his face was bright and cheerful. Louisa would fain, if she had given way to the feelings of her own heart, have run out to meet him, when the chaise first drew up to the door. The customs of society, however, which bind in their strong bond many of the better impulses of the heart, as well as restrain that which is evil, prevented her from so doing, but could not keep her from springing up with extended hand to greet him as soon as he entered the room.

"Here is a fair lady who has been frightening herself about you, my young friend," said the clergyman; "indeed, you must take care to get no more wounds and bruises, or her courage will all go, and she had once a good deal."

"There was no danger in this instance, at least," replied Morton, "for I had a phalanx of jailers and turnkeys about me sufficient to have protected a monarch. My journey has been successful, too, my dear sir," he continued, putting a small pocket-book into Dr. Western's hand, and seating himself by Louisa.

While the worthy rector opened the pocket-book, took out one paper after another, put on his spectacles, and examined them carefully, Louisa Charlton inquired somewhat timidly of Morton, whether he had seen Alfred Latimer!

"No," he replied, "on asking for him, I found that his mother was with him, and of course I could not break in upon their conference; but I will go and see him some other day, dearest girl, and offer him every means of defence. For, whatever may be my own conviction, it is but right that he should have the full opportunity of proving his innocence if possible."

"God grant it!" answered Louisa, sorrowfully—"God grant it! Even if he could show that it was not his hand that did it, what a matter of rejoicing it would be."

"They are all here, then," said Dr. Western, abruptly, raising his head from the small scraps of paper he had been studying, "there's no link wanting?"

"The only one that was missing is there sup-

plied," replied Morton; "so that every difficulty is removed."

"Well, then, you can have no objection now," said the worthy rector, rising from his chair. "Sister, allow me to introduce to you a new acquaintance. Mrs. Evelyn, the Earl of Mallington—my lord, my sister, Mrs. Evelyn."

Morton took the old lady's hand, laughing at her brother's formal introduction, and saying, "You must forgive me for my concealments, my dear madam, but as long as there was any doubt whatever of my being able to prove my title, I did not choose to assume a name that might be taken from me. And having, when I first came down here in search of different documents, judged it best to drop my final name of Wilmot, retaining only the two first as Edmond Morton, I could not well resume the other without betraying the whole secret."

"And do you think you deceived me?" asked Mrs. Evelyn, with a quiet smile; "I can assure you, my dear lord, I have been well aware of the fact for the last fortnight. From the time when you were declared the owner of Mallington Park, I settled the matter quite quietly in my own head that you were the heir of the peerage."

"Nay," answered Morton, "I might have been the owner of the park, my dear lady, without being the heir of the peerage, for the title to the estate was more easy to be proved than the title to the rank. But you have certainly concealed your knowledge very well, for I never imagined that you ever suspected how the case stood."

"Oh! a woman can keep a secret, notwithstanding all man's libels upon her," replied Mrs. Evelyn. "There is Louisa, who sits smiling there, as if it were a great relief to her to be freed from the burden. She has borne it most heroically, I can assure you, and never hinted it even to me, her oldest friend."

"From her I felt bound to have no concealment," answered Morton, "and never will," he continued, taking Louisa's hand; "though I won her as a simple gentleman, yet, when once won, she had a right to share all my thoughts."

Louisa gazed at him with dewy eyes, brilliant yet moist, like a landscape in the early morning; but, before she could reply, Mr. Western's old servant opened the door, saying, "Mrs. Windsor, sir, wishes to speak with you."

The words were addressed to Morton, and Dr. Western added, "She has been here twice this afternoon, and seems burthened with her secret also, for she did not think fit to communicate it to me, yet seemed very anxious indeed to bestow it upon you, asking particularly when you would return. You will find a fire in the library; and we shall be in the drawing-room when you have done with the good lady."

"She mentioned once before that she had something to tell me," answered Morton, going out. "Oh, come into this room, Mrs. Windsor," he continued, finding Mrs. Charlton's housekeeper in the passage.

Mrs. Windsor followed him into the library, and closed the door behind her, looking, as usual, perfectly prim and quiet, as if she had come about the most ordinary business in the world. "I remember you told me, when last I

was at Mallington House," said Morton, leaning on the table, "that you had something to communicate to me. Is it on the same subject you wish to speak with me to-day, or another, Mrs. Windsor?"

"The same, sir," replied Mrs. Windsor, in her usual, quick, brief manner. "I heard you had been wounded, sir, and did not like to intrude; but now you are well again, and things must soon come to a conclusion, I thought it best to come down, because there is no reason why Miss Charlton, who has always been good and kind to everybody, should be made a bit more unhappy than necessary, or why she, or you either, should be plundered of what you have a right to."

"Certainly not, Mrs. Windsor," answered Morton; "but may I inquire what you allude to, or why you think your young lady is likely to be made unhappy at all?"

"Why, sir," replied the housekeeper, "I know my mistress very well. I have known her for a great many years. Now, one can't do that without seeing and understanding what she means just as well as she does herself. Now, with regard to you, sir, and Miss Louisa, I have understood everything from the beginning, though I don't think you did."

"Certainly not from the beginning," replied Morton; "but I very soon found that there was something to be discovered, Mrs. Windsor."

"Oh dear, yes, sir," answered the abigail, with one of her axioms, which were rarely without a certain portion of good sense—"It's a very easy thing to conceal a great deal, but a very difficult thing to conceal that we are concealing something; however, as Mrs. Charlton never thought that I saw anything but what she wished me to see; I saw a great deal, as you may suppose, and I very quickly made up my mind as to what was her game with you."

"And, pray, what might it be, Mrs. Windsor?" asked Morton, desirous that the good lady should develop her own views.

"Why, sir, she took it into her head, when first you came down, that you were a painter," replied the housekeeper, "and she held to that opinion, because she was fond of it, long after she should have known better, if she ever gave it up at all. She thought, because you did not bring down servants, and horses, and a carriage of your own, that you must be a poor gentleman, at all events, who would be glad to marry a young lady with a good fortune at any price. She had been laying it out in her head for a long time, I know, and you were just the sort of person that suited her, for you were introduced by Dr. Western, and had the sort of air with you that would give her a good excuse for letting you always be with Miss Charlton without pledging her to anything in case you did not come up to her price. So you were quite a god-send in her way, and she had you a great deal more to the house than she ever had any one before."

Morton smiled to find how accurately Mrs. Windsor had calculated all her mistress's steps, and he inquired, "What might be the original cause of all this, Mrs. Windsor? for, taking it for granted that your view is quite correct, it seems to me that she has somewhat hurried all her proceedings."

"Ay, sir, that's because she's hard pressed just now," replied Mrs. Windsor; "she owes a great deal in different quarters, and people are getting impatient. She intended, some months ago, to have gone to London, and played the same game there, but there was a difficulty about money then, and you came down just at the time, and saved her the trouble. So she did everything in her power to let you love Miss Charlton on the one side, and, on the other, to make Miss Charlton love you; and when she found out that it all went on as she wished, she was quite delighted. She got in a little fright, indeed, when she found out that you had more money than she had fancied, but as she had sat down to the game, there was nothing for it but to play it out, which she did, I suppose, the last time you saw her."

Morton was not satisfied with such vague explanations, and determined to bring Mrs. Windsor to the point, he said, "Why, what do you suppose she did, my good lady?"

"I suppose, sir," said Mrs. Windsor, with a smile at the question, as if it were quite superfluous to put it, "that she told you she would be very happy to see you Miss Charlton's husband, provided you gave up one half of her fortune; that if you didn't, she would not give her consent, and, if you married without it, it would all come to herself. I am sure that was her plan, whether she put it in execution or not."

Morton paused and meditated, but the subject of his reverie was not exactly what the reader may suppose. He was considering with himself the exact topography of Mallington House, and calling to mind the relative positions of the drawing-room, the library, the dining-room, and the hall, with a view to ascertain whether Mrs. Windsor could have overheard what passed between him and Mrs. Charlton, for, under any other supposition, the precise knowledge which the worthy lady displayed was marvellous in his eyes. He settled it at length, however, that such a thing was impossible, and, therefore, that the housekeeper must have derived her information from some other source. "You are not very far wrong, Mrs. Windsor," he said, "but before we speak further on these rather delicate subjects, it will be as well for you to tell me what the intelligence you have to give me is, and how it bears upon these matters."

"Certainly, sir," replied Mrs. Windsor. "I am sure I ought to beg pardon for speaking upon them at all; but you are I came into the house when Miss Charlton was very young, and I have seen her grow up as nice a young lady as any in the world, and I cannot bear that she should be wronged. All I have, therefore, to say is, that Mrs. Charlton has no more to do with Miss Louisa's marriage than I have, whatever she may say."

"But," said Morton, "there is a codicil to Mr. Charlton's will, by which it is provided that if Louisa marries without her step-mother's consent, the whole property falls absolutely to Mrs. Charlton."

"Pooh, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Windsor, "that codicil is not worth a piece of packing-paper, and I can prove that it isn't."

Morton smiled at the boldness with which

she spoke, though far from being convinced that she was right in her assertion. "Women, I am afraid, my good lady," he replied, "are not the best judges of the law. The codicil is all written in Mr. Charlton's own hand, signed with his name, and, though not witnessed, is as good as any other part of the will. However, set your mind at ease about your young lady; it luckily happens that I am not so poor as Mrs. Charlton supposed. As my wife, she will feel no difference in point of comfort and ease from that which she has been accustomed to; and to one thing I have perfectly made up my mind, not to drive any bargain whatsoever with regard to her fortune. She shall have all or none. Her hand is too precious a thing to be bought or sold."

"I was quite sure you would think so, sir," replied the housekeeper, "otherwise I should not have said a word. But with regard to the will, I am quite sure you are mistaken, and, as I fancy, things standing as they do, Mrs. Charlton will not be long before she begins the matter with you again, I think you might as well ask her one or two questions, and see what she answers."

"There can be no harm in doing that," replied Morton; "but what may the questions be, Mrs. Windsor?"

"First, sir, I would ask," rejoined the housekeeper, "whether she was in the library for an hour and a half, when everybody else was in bed, on the night that Mr. Charlton died, and whether she didn't write a great number of papers there, and burn several of them that were not quite done to her mind? Then I would have you ask her where Mr. Charlton was on the 25th of July, 18—?"

"Why that was the day that the codicil was signed," rejoined Morton, with the light beginning to glimmer in upon him.

"That is the day it is dated," answered Mrs. Windsor; "but what I want to know is, where he was on that day, for it is dated Mallington, too, I think, and there must be a mistake somewhere."

Morton gazed at her steadily for a moment; but the woman's face was all calm and quiet, adding nothing whatever to her words. "I think, Mrs. Windsor," he said, at length, "I had better call in Dr. Western to hear our consultation, as he is one of Louisa's guardians, and an executor under the will."

"I don't know, sir," replied Mrs. Windsor, in the same quiet, but quick tone, "you are the best judge; but, perhaps till you have considered the matter, it would be as well to keep it between you and me and Miss Charlton. Dr. Western is a magistrate, you know, and may think himself bound to take strong measures, which, when once they are begun, must be gone on with. I don't wish to do my mistress any harm, and I think if you were to talk quietly with her, and just ask her the questions I have told you, all would go right, and things wouldn't happen that I'm sure would break poor Miss Charlton's heart. It would be a sad thing, sir, to have mother and son in jail both at once, especially for Miss Louisa, when it is her own father's wife she has to do with."

"You are right, Mrs. Windsor, and I thank you for the hint," answered Morton; "it will,

indeed, be as well to say no more upon this subject than is absolutely necessary. Is there anybody else besides yourself who knows any of the facts?"

"A fellow-servant, sir," answered Mrs. Windoor, "knows that my mistress was in the library a long time that night, and that she burnt several papers, but no one ever thought of the date of the codicil, as it is called, but myself. Whenever it was read, I thought 'why, master and mistress were both away at that time, or I am much mistaken; and when I went and looked at my books, I found it was just so. They went away four days before, and did not come back till the week after.'"

Morton mused, but again the subject of his meditation was very different from that which might be supposed. The first question he put to himself was "Might it not be better to do anything this unhappy woman demands, rather than expose so disgraceful an affair!" But the moment after, he replied to himself "No, I see not why she should be suffered to triumph in her knavery. If she escapes prosecution, she is, perhaps, too leniently treated." "Well, Mrs. Windoor," he continued aloud, "I am very much obliged to you for the information you have given me; I will soon bring the question to issue with Mrs. Charlton, even if she does not do so herself; and, should need be, I will send for you to speak with me further. At all events your services shall not be forgotten, you may depend upon it."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," replied Mrs. Windoor, with a low courtesy, "but I wish for nothing but to see right done, and I am quite sure that neither you nor Miss Charlton will see me suffer for speaking the truth. I must get home now as fast as I can, for my mistress may soon come home now," and thus saying, she courtesied again and quitted the room.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

WHEN Morton entered the drawing-room after his conference with Mrs. Windoor, he found Dr. Western with a note in his hand, which the rector handed to him without comment. Morton took it and instantly recognized Mrs. Charlton's hand-writing, which he had often seen on sundry neatly-written, neatly-folded, and neatly-sealed billets of invitation to Mallington House. The contents of the present epistle, however, were of a very different character, and as he read a smile came over his countenance, the internal causes of which I will leave the reader to divine when he sees the substance of the lady's note, which was as follows:—

"My dear sir,

"I must really remonstrate upon the conduct which Miss Charlton pursues, and is suffered to pursue. You must be well aware that I have no false or affected prudery about me; and I trust that, though my own conduct has always been governed by propriety, I have ever shown full consideration for the feelings, and sometimes more than consideration for the foolishness of young people. I learn, however, that Louisa, since you thought fit as her guardian to remove her from my house, has been permitted

to walk about the whole neighborhood with Mr. Morton alone, when that gentleman has not even yet obtained my consent to his engagement, as I suppose it must be called, with Miss Charlton, whom you must know I have always looked upon and treated as if she were my own daughter. I should have thought that gentleman's own good sense and good feeling, of which he is by no means destitute, would have shown him the impropriety of such conduct; but I cannot sit by and neglect my duty by suffering it to proceed any longer without some explanation between himself and me. If, therefore, he is now at your house, where I understand he is usually to be found, I beg you will communicate to him what I say, and hint that it will be expedient that we should have some conversation without delay.

"Believe me to be, my dear sir, yours, &c.,

"EMILY CHARLTON."

Such was the present well-concocted epistle which met Morton's eyes, and, returning it to Dr. Western, still smiling, he said, "Well, my dear sir, what do you think of it?"

"Very bad—very bad!" said Dr. Western, shaking his head, "you must act as you think fit, my young friend; this is a matter in which I cannot advise you."

"Perhaps the best way will be to see the lady at once," observed Morton, after some consideration; "for though I must speak with Louisa fully upon the subject before I can finally determine upon anything, it may be as well to hear what Mrs. Charlton can say, in the first place."

"I will abide by anything you determine," replied Louisa; "for I am sure, Morton, you will remember that she was my father's wife, and will not do anything that is harsh or unkind."

"Undoubtedly I will not, Louisa," answered Morton; "but yet, my love, you do not know the whole. To-morrow morning, if it be fine, I will ask for one of those walks which Mrs. Charlton's notions of propriety so strongly condemn just now, and then I will tell you the whole. I wish much that my good friend Quatterly was down here still, for I want a little of his legal help in judging of these matters. I am afraid there is a certain perversity in my nature which induces me to resist desperately one part of the fate of all human beings."

"What part is that, Morton?" asked Louisa.

"Being cheated, dear girl," answered Morton, laughing; "but now I will run away, lest I be tempted to give you any more of such blunt answers."

Taking his hat, Morton walked slowly up the hill to Mallington House, considering as he went how he should act under the circumstances in which he was placed; and coming to Sterne's conclusion, that it would be better to determine upon no course at all, but let events take their own way. He had twice to ring at the bell before he was admitted; and there was something in the whole appearance and state of the house, negligence in the air of the servants, a want of that activity and propriety which had been formerly observable, with a number of little circumstances, very nearly indescribable, which showed Morton that a

great change had taken place since Louisa left her own dwelling; and that the respect as well as affection of the inferior persons it contained, was gone from those about them. The butler, who opened the door, replied, in answer to his questions, that Mrs. Charlton was at home, and disengaged; and Morton, as he followed the man, said deliberately, "Have the goodness to tell her that the Earl of Mallington wishes to see her." The butler instantly put on a deferential air; and while Morton remained for a moment or two without, he could hear his name announced, and Mrs. Charlton exclaim, in a sharp tone, "The Earl of Mallington—what Earl of Mallington?"

"Mr. Morton as was, ma'am, if you please," answered the butler.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Charlton, with a dry and somewhat sneering prolongation of the sound, "show his lordship in—show him in, by all means."

Morton was accordingly introduced; and the fair lady, rising, made him a profound, and too ceremonious courtesy, saying, "I am informed that I have the honor of seeing the Earl of Mallington—pray be seated, my lord."

"The same, my dear madam," replied Morton, calmly, for he easily understood that it was not particularly agreeable for Mrs. Charlton to find his rank and station such as would afford no reasonable ground of objection to his marriage with Louisa. Finding she remained silent, "however," he continued, "my friend, Dr. Western, informs me that you wished for some conversation with me; and although I should not under all circumstances have ventured to intrude upon you just yet, without such a communication, I thought it better to come up at once, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour."

"And perhaps thinking," added Mrs. Charlton, who had rapidly arranged her plan, "that the Earl of Mallington might find my views different from those expressed to Mr. Morton. In that, my lord, at least you are mistaken, for, taking it for granted that your present rank is not, like your former name, assumed, that fact will only strengthen the opinions I before expressed."

"Let me correct one error," said Morton, as she paused for an instant, "neither my present rank, nor my former name, was assumed, my dear madam; my name is simply Edmund Morton Wilnot, or Wilmot Morton, and as I never assume anything that is not clearly my own, I did not take the title of Earl of Mallington so long as any one could entertain a doubt of my right to it. As all doubts and difficulties, however, are now removed, I should be deceiving you were I to give myself any other name."

"I am glad to find, sir, you did not deceive me before," replied Mrs. Charlton somewhat sharply, "and I only wish you had carried your candor a little further and informed me of your pretensions, as I should certainly, under those circumstances, have neglected the honor of your acquaintance. I have an objection—I may almost say an insuperable objection—to young women of an inferior rank marrying persons of family and title. I have myself experienced all the evils which result from such unequal con-

nections, and am most indisposed to sanction them in any case."

Morton could not refrain from a smile. "I am very sorry to hear it," he replied, "but I fear, my dear madam, there is no help for it in this instance, as I have no power to give up my rank, and no inclination to give up Louisa."

"You speak with prodigious coolness, my lord," answered Mrs. Charlton, with her cheek flushing and her eye gleaming, "and I doubt not in the least that your fortune is so enormous as to make six or seven thousand a year with your wife a matter of no consequence to you at all—oh dear, no, such a thing is quite a trifle to the new Earl of Mallington! But one thing I must say, that Miss Charlton's guardians will not do their duty unless they see, when such a sacrifice is made, that a settlement quite equal to the loss is secured to their ward."

"That will all be easily settled," answered Morton, in a tone of the most provoking indifference: "I have the consent of both her guardians, which is, I believe, all that is necessary."

"To her marriage with you, sir, perhaps it is," answered Mrs. Charlton, "but to your obtaining a penny of her fortune something more is required—my consent. Unless that is obtained, every shilling she has, this house, and all it contains, is mine. You take her a beggar if you take her at all without my approbation—pray remember that."

Morton was provoked more than he had fancied his contempt would suffer him to be. "If what you say, my dear madam, is true," he replied, "I think—taking the whole matter in a mercantile point of view, and dealing with it as a matter of business—you would be very foolish to give your consent at all. You seem to forget that it would be a dead loss to you, and I cannot conceive how a lady of such correct calculations can even consider the matter at all, unless, indeed, you entertain the opinion which some people have, that the grounds of your pretensions are not quite so sure as they seem at first sight."

"Not sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton vehemently. "What says her father's will? You have seen it, doubtless, sir!—studied it deeply. I am pretty certain. It is proved, registered, acted upon, and admits of no doubt. How will you get over that, I should like to know."

"There are two or three ways in which I might answer that question," replied Morton; "in the first place, my dear madam, a Court of Chancery, though an inconvenient resource, yet gives the means of putting a right and lawful construction upon wills; and it would be for that court to consider whether the refusal of consent, which would entitle you to the whole of Mr. Charlton's property, must not absolutely be made upon reasonable grounds."

"There is nothing to that effect in the codicil!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton; "the word is simply consent."

"True," replied Morton; "but the codicil promises that it is made on the consideration that heiresses are too often the dupes of sharpers; and that the power given to you is to prevent that result in the case of Mr. Charlton's daughter. Such being the case, and I not being a sharper, the construction of the will may, perhaps, afford a curious and intricate question to the bar."

Mrs. Charlton remained silent and very pale for a minute or two; but at length she answered, "I see, my lord, that you wish to frighten me with the idea of a long lawsuit, but it won't do. I am not easily frightened, I can tell you."

"I should think not," replied Morton; "and, therefore, what I am going to say will, probably, produce no alarm. The law proceedings, Mrs. Charlton, may, probably, be reduced within a very narrow compass, for there are other questions connected with this will, which may be much more easily decided than its construction. The first will be, is the codicil genuine?"

"Genuine!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, grasping the arm of the sofa—"genuine!"

"Yes, my dear madam, genuine," replied Morton; "there are two minor questions affecting that greater one, which it will be well for you to consider before you proceed farther in the course you have thought fit to adopt. The first question is, whether on the night after Mr. Charlton's death, and in possession of all his keys, you did or did not pass a considerable time, when the whole household were in bed, in the examination of different papers, and writing others in the library? The next question will be, whether the codicil to Mr. Charlton's will is not dated Mallington, on a day when Mr. Charlton himself was many miles distant from the spot? I would recommend these subjects to your consideration, and until you have considered them, I think we had better delay any farther consideration on the subject, for there are acts which place people in very great danger, and which none of those connected with them can wish to be investigated too closely."

Thus saying, Morton rose, and, bowing to Mrs. Charlton, walked towards the door. She sat however, on the sofa, still and silent as a statue, with her horrified eyes fixed upon the table, and the agony of detected guilt at her heart.

Notwithstanding the contempt he felt for her, Morton was moved with compassion when he beheld the intense suffering which his words produced; and, after pausing for an instant at the door, he turned back, and, approaching close to Louisa's step-mother, he said, "Mrs. Charlton, listen to me for a moment."

She remained perfectly silent and motionless, however, as if she were deprived of all thought and sensation. Her face was deadly pale, her lips were white, and it seemed as if she hardly breathed. "Listen to me, I beg of you," he continued. "Louisa and myself are disposed to do anything that is kind towards you. We cannot recognize a claim that we do not believe rightly exists, and, therefore, anything you desire must not be put in such a shape. We have no inclination to stir this question of the will, unless it be forced upon us; and farther for myself, allow me to say, that, out of affection for her, I am ready now, or at any time, to do all I can to assist or befriend her father's widow. Pray, think of this, and let me hear from you, when you will not find me unwilling to serve you."

A ray of consciousness came into Mrs. Charlton's eyes, and she held out her hand to him. Morton took it for a moment, then released it, and left the room.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

There are times and seasons when intense corporeal suffering is a relief, for mental agony is far more terrible to bear; and it fortunately happens, in the strange mysterious union between soul and body, that in general the powers of the human frame give way when the pangs of the spirit reach a certain point, affording either a diversion or a cessation of thought. At her mother's earnest request, Lucy Edmonds was conveyed from the rectory to the park-keeper's house at Mallington Park, under a strict promise on the widow's part not to say a word that could give her any certainty upon the terrible subject of her suspicions. Caution, however, was not very long necessary, for though Lucy was placed in bed and kept perfectly tranquil, yet before nightfall she began to show symptoms of fever: her thoughts wandered; her cheek grew flushed, her eye dull, her breathing quick; and about midnight delirium came on, in which she seemed to lose all consciousness of her actual situation. Sometimes, indeed, she would rave of Alfred Latimer, but then it was as connected with the past, not with the present. She would tell him to leave her, not to ask her to disobey her father; she would assure him that she loved him, but that she could never be his; and then, at other times, she would go back to still earlier days, and mutter about the scenes of her childhood, and her brother who was dead. For nine days this state continued, and then, carefully and tenderly nursed, and with constant and skillful attention on the part of Mr. Nethersole, youth and a good constitution began to triumph over disease and grief. The delirium ceased; she became quiet and more at ease; but it would seem that for a time memory of more recent events was altogether obliterated. She spoke little, and only uttered a word or two at a time, but those words showed that she had forgotten her marriage and all the terrible events connected with it, her husband's situation, her father's fate, her hapless journey with Alfred Latimer, and her own sad return to the scenes of her youth. There was a blank in memory, a cloud over a part of the past—dark and fearful, it is true, but yet for some time impenetrable, though she often tried to scan it, and with feeble efforts strove to call forth the figures that were behind that gloomy curtain. She felt that there was something dreadful, but she knew not what; and the mind's powers were not yet sufficiently restored to let her dwell long upon any one train of thought. Doctor Western visited her, after watching with the most kindly care every change that took place, anxious to seize the right moment for administering the only sort of consolation she could receive. One day it seemed to him that the time was fast approaching, for Lucy was much better. She could sit up; she could hold a longer conversation; she listened with attention, and apparently with deep thought to all he said, and he ventured to dilate in general terms upon the duty and necessity of submitting patiently to the will of God under all afflictions, of moderating grief, and receiving every painful dispensation with firm faith in the inscrutable mercy of the Almighty. He made no personal

application of his words, and left her, as he thought, calmer and better prepared. But when he was gone, Lucy fell into a fit of deep meditation, and then gave way to bitter tears. Her mother, who slept beside her, perceived that she wept through a great part of the night, and though her health did not suffer, as might have been expected—though she rose the next day, and dressed herself with apparently greater strength than she had yet displayed since her illness—though she took food, and everything that was recommended to her—yet a deep gloom hung upon her, and in the evening she spoke with her mother, for the first time, of her husband and of her father.

Mrs. Edmunds endeavored to turn the conversation, though the irrepressible tears rose in her own eyes, as she sought to speak of more indifferent subjects; but Lucy, though, from the agitation she perceived in her mother, she would not press the subject of her father's death, could not be brought to refrain from asking further questions in regard to Alfred Latimer.

"Where is he, my dear mother?" she said; "do not be afraid to tell me, for I now recollect all. They took him away from me, and put him in prison, I know. You must tell me where he is confined, for I must write to him—when I am able."

The widow, seeing that she would not be satisfied without information, thought it best to tell her the truth, that her husband was in Sturton Jail. But about ten the following morning she set out to inform Dr. Western of what had occurred, leaving her son to sit with Lucy during her absence. When she went the poor girl was up and dressed, and apparently trying to amuse herself by reading; but as soon as Mrs. Edmunds had quitted the cottage she called her brother to her, saying, "John, I want you to tell me one thing, and then I won't ask you any more. Who killed our father?"

Her voice was perfectly calm, though low, and her manner displayed little or no agitation. But the boy, who had been warned beforehand, replied with glistening eyes, "Indeed, I don't know, Lucy. People say that tall man, Brown, or the other, Jack Williams; but nobody can tell rightly yet."

Lucy was silent, and looked at the book again, but her eye did not move along the line; and had the boy been very watchful, he must have seen that her thoughts were busy with objects beyond her sight. About five minutes afterwards his sister looked up, and said "I wish you would run up to the hall, John, and ask Mrs. Chalk to lend me the great book full of pictures, that she once showed me. Tell her I will take great care of it, and you bring it down carefully, there's a good boy."

Perhaps her brother might have hesitated to obey before his mother returned, if it had not been for the thought of the pictures in the book, which he was well inclined to look at himself. He paused an instant, indeed, but Lucy repeated her request, and, taking his hat, he set off as fast as he could for the hall.

As soon as he was gone his sister rose suddenly, went into the other room, searched for her bonnet and shawl, and having found them, hastened to the door and looked out, then dart-

ing away with a quick step she made a circuit round the house, gained the shelter of the wood, and hurried along one of the paths which led towards the stile near Dame Hazlewood's cottage. As she approached, however, she heard voices in the road, and turned away to the left, to another stile further up the hill, and then issued forth from the park, and bent her steps direct towards Sturton. She walked on for some way with much greater strength than might have been expected, not taking the path through the wood, but following the road to the left through several small villages. When she had gone about half the distance, however, her strength failed her, and she sat down to rest for some time by the way side. In about twenty minutes she rose again, and with tottering steps hurried on till she came opposite to a little public-house on the other side of the road, where she paused, and looked up with a hesitating and uncertain air. But she felt that she could not proceed further on foot without refreshment, and knowing the people to be good and honest country folks, well acquainted with her family, she crossed over and went in. At first the landlord and his wife did not recollect her, for she was much changed both in dress and appearance—pale, thin, wan, and with her lips parched and dry with recent illness—but when they did call her person to mind, they showed her such kindness as their somewhat unpolished air permitted, and seeming to divine whither she was going, set before her some refreshments without asking any questions. The good man and his wife talked together, indeed, for some time in a low voice; and Lucy, terrified lest any one should stop her, remarked that their eyes were directed towards her as they spoke, and rose sooner than she would otherwise have done to depart, asking what she had to pay.

"You are not fit to go, my dear," said the landlord, coming forward to her; "I suppose you are walking to Sturton; but it's a long way for a poor sick girl like you, on foot. I wonder your mother let you come, and alone, too."

"I must see my husband, you know," answered Lucy, judging from the man's words that her whole history was known.

"Well, I don't say but you must," replied the landlord; "I suppose that's right, whatever may have happened. But I'll tell you what, my dear, you had better have our chaise-cart. Bill will soon drive you over."

It may easily be conceived that this offer was a great relief to the poor girl's mind. The little tax-cart was soon brought out, a pillow was placed in it to render the seat more easy, and in about three-quarters of an hour poor Lucy Edmunds was at the gates of Sturton Jail. Her heart sunk when she approached them, and gazed up at the awful and gloomy masses of stone, which seemed to harmonize but too sadly and darkly with all the crime and sorrow which, from time to time, they contained. She rang the bell, however, and on the wicket being opened asked to see her husband, Mr. Latimer. The man gazed at her with a cold look, indifferent both by hardness of nature and long habit to every species of grief, but a piece of money slipped into his hand soon softened him, and bidding her wait a minute in the lodge,

while he asked the governor, he hurried away, leaving Lucy with one of the turnkeys, who was smoking a pipe at the table. Both remained silent, and the porter returned in a minute or two with the joyful tidings that the governor had no objection.

With eyes bent down, and wavering steps, and a heart beating wildly at every door they passed, poor Lucy followed the jailer along the passages of the prison to the room where her husband was confined. By the time the two large bolts were drawn back, and the door unlocked, she could hardly stand; but the moment after, the sight of her husband sitting at the table revived her, and, running forward, while the man said, "Here's your lady, sir, come to see you," she cast her arms round his neck, and wept.

Alfred Latimer's eye was haggard, and his whole look anxious and despairing; but, nevertheless, he was truly rejoiced to see poor Lucy again. She was the only being on earth for whom he had ever felt anything like real tenderness and affection; and, in the moment of his affliction and his danger, her coming was a true consolation and comfort to him, reviving for the time the faint light of better feelings in his dark and obdurate heart. He pressed her warmly to her breast; he soothed, he caressed her, and even so far forgot himself as to remark her altered appearance, and to say, "You look very ill, love. You must have suffered a great deal, I am sure, my poor Lucy."

"I have been very ill," answered Lucy; "they thought me dying, I believe, for I quite lost my senses, after I came back; and they would not have let me come now, I am sure, if they had known it."

"They have no right to stop you!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer, sharply. "Are not you my wife? They can't stop a wife coming to see her husband."

"No; it was because I have been so ill, and am so weak," replied the poor girl. "I feel as if I should faint now."

"Here, take some wine," said Alfred Latimer, placing her in the chair where he had been sitting, and reaching a bottle from the mantel-piece. "You must keep up, Lucy—you must keep up, for I may want you to help me—I am sure you will, Lucy, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, that I will!" answered Lucy. "I will help you, whatever be the case, Alfred, for that is my duty now; yet I would fain ask you one question, Alfred," she continued, in a sad and hesitating tone—"only one question."

A dark and fiend-like scowl came upon his face, and he replied, "Ask me no questions at all, for I shall answer none—that's to say, at present—for small words often do great mischief. Your only business is—if I am your husband, and you really love me—to do the best you can to get me out of this scrape."

Lucy was silent for a moment, with her eyes bent down in bitter thought; but looking up the instant after, she said, gravely, "I will do all I can."

"That's a dear girl!" answered her husband; "and I'll tell you what you must do. In the first place, you must know nothing about this business at all; and if any one asks you, say so."

"I do know nothing," answered Lucy; "they have told me nothing yet."

"Well, that's all right," answered her husband, sitting down beside her, and putting his arm round her waist. "Take some more wine, my love, that has done you good already. I'll tell you how it all is, Lucy: the best scheme I could devise has failed. My mother, some how or another, got together ten thousand pound, and tried to bribe one of the clerks to put a flaw in the indictment against me. It was the lawyer Hazzard, who managed it all; but the fool of a clerk would not take the money, and threatened to peach besides. My mother told the lawyer not to tell me that it had failed—some of her own cunning schemes made her want to keep it from me; but he was here this morning, and let it all out; so the only chance is by what I am going to tell you—but you do not listen, Lucy—would you, too, help to ruin me?"

Lucy had remained with her eyes bent down, and with a look of deep and bitter thought upon her face; but she instantly raised her head, saying, "I do listen, Alfred; I hear every word; and you know I would give my life to save you. Only tell me what I have to do, and I will do it, if I have strength; but I have very little, Alfred, and I fear what little I have will fail me very soon."

"Pooh, nonsense!" answered Alfred Latimer, all whose selfishness had returned upon him in full force again; "you must get a chaise, dear Lucy, and that will save you; then bid the post-boy drive you over by the bridge here, round the common behind Mallington House; make him stop near the gravel pits, and seek out Mother Brown, who has a cottage there. You know Mother Brown?"

Lucy shook her head. "Why here is the cottage close by the pits," replied Alfred Latimer, "where I was taken when I got such a fall. But you must find her out, at all events, and tell her if she would save her son's life, she must get some pheasants or hares, or game of any kind, and hide them away in the very back part of the cave in Wenlock Wood. She'll know the place quite well. You must give her some money to pay for the game, for I don't think the old wretch would spend a penny if her own life depended on it; and tell her that you will give her more when you know that it's done, for she's not to be trusted. I don't care what the game is like, and the longer it has been killed, the better, especially if there be a good deal of blood about it."

A sharp shudder passed all over poor Lucy's frame, but her husband did not remark it, and went on to say, "Simpink, the poacher, will get her as much as she wants; and the more she gets the better. Do you hear?"

"Yes," answered Lucy, "I hear, and I will go and do it directly. Can I do anything else, Alfred?"

"No, my love," he replied, "but bring me some money with you the next time you come. What have you got with you now?"

"Seven or eight guineas," answered Lucy; "I brought two hundred over with me from France, thinking you might want some, and I have spent four or five."

"Well, bring me a hundred next time you

come, and take care that no one sees you with it, for most likely they would stop it."

He paused, and thought for a moment, and then added, thoughtfully, "I wish to Heaven I could see Tankerville! he would soon help me to get out of this place. Couldn't you write to him, Lucy, and tell him my mother will give him a thousand pound if he can get me over safely to France?"

"But where is he to be found?" asked Lucy Edmonds, leaning her head upon her hand.

"Ay, that's the question," answered her husband. "Well, there's no help for it; if you can find out where he is, tell him what I say; but, at all events, do the other, and come back and see me as soon as you can, there's a dear girl."

"Would it not be better for him to come and see you himself?" asked Lucy; "he could manage it all better than I could, I am sure."

"They won't let him in," answered Alfred Latimer, impatiently. "You, or my mother, or the lawyer, well and good, but they'll let me see no one else; but, stay a bit, love, I'll tell them to get you a chaise into the court of the jail, and you can tell the boy to drive towards Mallington House, then they'll think you are going to my mother."

Lucy made no answer, and her husband rang the bell, which was one of the conveniences granted in those days to a prisoner who could afford to pay for good accommodation. A turnkey speedily appeared; a chaise was ordered, and quickly brought to the gates, for it was not allowed to enter the court, and Alfred Latimer took leave of Lucy, embracing her, and kissing her tenderly. She suffered him to do so, for it cannot be said that she returned his caresses; a great change, indeed, having come over her demeanor towards him since she first entered the prison. It is needless to enter into any long explanation of the cause, for a few words that she murmured to herself, after having entered the chaise, and told the postilion where to drive, may probably be sufficient. As the vehicle drove rapidly away towards the bridge over the river, the unhappy girl sunk back in the seat, clasping her hands together, and saying, "Oh, my father, I am helping your murderer; but he is my husband—he is my husband!"

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

ABOUT five o'clock on the evening of the same day the woman called Mother Brown might be seen returning to her own cottage, laden with a large bundle of broken sticks and dry gorse. As soon as she had entered the hovel she deposited her load upon the floor, bolted the door, and then taking a quantity of the thorns and wood laid them upon the nearly extinct embers which glowed faintly upon the hearth. The dry faggots speedily caught fire, and blazed up; and then, hanging her pot upon the hook, she filled it with water; and, returning to the bundle, spread the furze and sticks abroad, drawing out from the very heart of the whole a fine barn-door hen, stripped of the feathers. The neck hung down limp and pliant, as if it had not been long killed, and the old woman,

with a low, chuckling laugh, muttered, as she raised it, "Ah! thou'lt lay no more eggs for Dame Johnson; she'll find thy feathers, if she wants them, under the hedge."

After certain preliminaries, such as cutting off the head, which was given to her one-eyed cat, that sat by the fire, the fowl was consigned to the pot; and the old woman continued to hover about, moving now this thing, and now that, to very little purpose, and talking to herself the while, in a rambling incoherent sort of way, "Ah! they may hang him, if they like, for me," she said, picking up the sticks, and putting them in a corner by the fire—"the v'mint! to go away, and rob a rich house, and never think of giving his old mother a penny of it all; he'll make a prettier corpse than Josh Williams, any how, for he's a devil of a sight a bigger man, though t'other is so strong. That Latimer is a smart youth, any how; I should like to see him cut a tumble, but I suppose the boys would hoot me if I went to have a peep. Well, I can stay away; I've seen many a one hanged in my day, so it's no great loss; I wish half the world were hanged!—that pot's a-bubbling over," and she ran and lifted the lid, and took some of the water out. "Well, it's a funny world," she continued, in the same moralizing vein; "people seem born to be hanged, or get into trouble; but I'd rather be hanged, arter all, than go to Botany, and then have to work for them as sent me. The lad was not a bad lad, if he would have kept within compass, and not put his head in Jemmy's cravat; but if a man will pull a rope, he must—there's no stopping him. I should like to get him out of the pitcher, notwithstanding."

She was by this time stooping down to put a bit of tile under one leg of the table, which was either naturally shorter than its brethren, or had met with an inequality in the floor, which offered a very good exemplification of the ups and downs of life; but just as she was in the act some one from without lifted the latch, and pushed the door sharply. Up started Mother Brown, giving an apprehensive look towards the door, and then another at the cat, who was still busy with the fowl's head. With a somewhat blasphemous objurcation of her fellow companion, for not finishing her meal quicker, the old woman tried to take away the head, and meeting with the gratitude she might expect, in the form of a sharp scratch, she drove the head and its prey into the neighboring room, while the personage without shook the door again and again, exclaiming, "Come, open it, or I'll burst it in; I see you quite plain, you old jade!"

Finding her castle likely to be stormed, Mother Brown thought it best to surrender discretion, and, opening the door, exclaimed in a tone of surprise, as Captain Tank walked in, "Lord, sir, is that you? I once think who it was, and I was afraid, for I quite a lone woman now, since they nabbed my Tommy."

"Well, you may shut the door, if you now," answered Captain Tankerville, for I have come for a night's lodging, and I want to hear about your boy Tommy, as you call him, and my friend Alfred Latimer."

"Lawk, sir, I can't take you in," answered Mrs. Brown.

"No, that you can't, granny," answered Tankerville, playing on the words; "though you have taken many a one in, in your day, I dare say; but I'm not so easily done, and I intend to stay here all night, I can tell you. You shall have half-a-crown for your pains, so don't say another word about it. Now, tell me about your son Tommy, and where they've put him and Jack Williams and young Latimer; I shouldn't wonder if there's a penny to be made out of that blade yet."

"You've just got out yourself, I dare say, captain," said Mrs. Brown; "my son told me, when he brought you here, that you're a famous one for diddling the beakies; and so you want to lodge here, not to be seen."

"No, you're out, old woman," answered Captain Tankerville, who, whether her surmise was true or false, was not willing to make her his confidant. "The old gentleman who had me in couldn't make out his case; but you don't answer my questions—what have you got in that pot?"

"Hush!" cried Mother Brown, "there's some one coming."

"Is there, by Jove!" cried the worthy captain; "then I'll make myself scarce," and away he went into the other room, closing the door carefully behind him.

Scarcely had he disappeared, when a gentle knock was heard at the door, and Mother Brown exclaimed, in her gruff and indifferent tone, "Come in, whoever ye be!"

The person who appeared, as the reader may suppose, was no other than poor Lucy, who inquired, as she entered, "Is your name Brown, ma'am?"

"Yes, my pretty lady," answered the old hag; "and I'm not a ghost either, though you look as pale as if you seed one."

"I am very tired," answered Lucy, "and have been ill; but I want you to do me a service, Mrs. Brown, and you shall be well paid for it."

The idea of money always had an immense effect upon the person to whom these words were addressed; and she speedily became extremely civil, asking Lucy to sit down, eyeing her shawl with a certain sort of glance, which was in itself an evident breach of the tenth commandment. Lucy's business, however, was soon entered upon, and she was going on to tell all that Alfred Latimer wanted the old woman to do, when Mother Brown raised her finger with a monitory gesture and elevated eyebrows, saying, in a whisper, "Hush! there is some one in there; we had better go out before the door, and talk." But before her suggestion could be followed, Captain Tankerville, who had heard the name of Alfred Latimer more than once mentioned, walked in, with his usual swaggering air, wishing Lucy good evening, as an old acquaintance.

"Oh! this is so fortunate, Captain Tankerville," said the poor girl, "for I was told to write to you on the part of my poor husband."

"Husband!" repeated Captain Tankerville. "Oh!—aye, very well—but we had better shut and bolt the door, and then we can talk without being interrupted."

Lucy's cheek had flushed at his first words; but she replied at once, "No, there is no need

of that, I have very little to say;" and she drew nearer to the door, in order to go out, if he attempted to close it, for there was something she dreaded exceedingly in that man, and then, going on, she gave both to him and the old woman the messages with which she had been charged by her husband.

Captain Tankerville, for his part, mused in silence for a moment or two over what he heard; but the old woman at once exclaimed, "But the money! the money! one can't buy swiahtails, or lions either, without money."

"Here is enough for that purpose," answered Lucy, drawing forth her purse, and giving the old woman all it contained, except what was just sufficient to pay the expenses of the chaise.

"When you have done what I tell you, and I am sure the game is there, you will receive five guineas more."

"Five guineas!" said Mother Brown; "that's very little, considering I have to walk so far."

"Why, you old besom!" exclaimed Captain Tankerville, joining in, "you wouldn't hang your own son for the sake of a walk, would you?"

"I don't care whether he's hanged or not," answered the hag; "howsoever, I'll do it—but where am I to get the five guineas, my pretty lady?"

"Come down to me at Mallington Park," answered Lucy, "and you shall have it—come to Mrs. Edmonds's; but remember you do not speak a word of this to any one but myself. Ask for Mrs. Latimer."

The old woman answered only by a low unpleasant chuckle, and Lucy took a step towards the door; but though her heart was sadly wrung by contending feelings, she thought she had not yet done her duty fully to her husband; and turning again to Captain Tankerville, she added, in a trembling voice, "I hope, sir, you will be able to do what I asked. You had better see Mrs. Charlton as soon as possible, for no time is to be lost."

"I suppose not," answered Tankerville, dryly; "I will do my best; for, to be frank, a thousand pounds is something worth having; and besides, it's always as well to help a friend out of a scrape. We sometimes get a help in return; and I like Latimer, too. He's a devilish good fellow."

"He seems quite sure you can do what he wishes, if you please," replied Lucy. "I trust—I hope he is not guilty."

"Oh! as to guilty or not, I have nothing to do with that," said Captain Tankerville, with a laugh, that made the poor girl shudder; "but as to getting him out, that may be a different affair. Stone walls are stone walls. He's not very prudent, as he has shown already; and he has got two other fellows in with him, who must be of the party, I suppose. If I were in myself, I could manage it, I dare say; for then I could direct the whole; but now it can only be done by a good lot of money."

"That will not be wanting, I am sure," replied Lucy. "Mrs. Charlton will supply all that is needed; but now I must go, for I have been away long."

"Well, well—I dare say we shall manage it," said Tankerville, whose imagination warmed at the idea of the thousand pounds, and who was

the prospect of extracting considerable sums from Mrs. Charlton, at all events; "I'll do my best, Lucy, and come down and tell you how all goes on; for we may want your help to tell him news, and let him know what we are about."

There was a familiarity in his tone that pained Lucy—I might say, that punished her—for she felt that the situation in which she had been seen by the man before her had degraded her even in his eyes, all degraded as he was himself—and, with a brief word or two of reply, she hurried away again, got into the chaise, and drove sadly back to her mother's house. She had gone through the fatigues and the exertion of that day with resolution that conquered even bodily weakness, with powers that she herself had not known she could display; but the moment that she had crossed the threshold, and was clasped in her mother's arms, she fainted away, and lay for some time as if she were dead. When she recovered, Mrs. Edmonds asked no questions, fearful of agitating her, and Lucy herself was the first to speak of her going. "My dear mother," she said, "I have been to see my husband: you must forgive me—for, whatever he has done, I am his wife, and must do my duty to him. I must go again too, and you must not try to stop me, for if you do I shall die."

"It is only for your own sake, I would try to stop you, Lucy," replied her mother; "for, indeed, my child, you are not fit for such exertion. You have almost killed yourself now."

"It would do me much more harm to stay away," replied Lucy; "but I will not go to-morrow, I will take that day to rest and recover." Much, indeed, did she need it; until the following evening she remained in bed.

In the meanwhile Captain Tankerville sat for more than an hour in Mother Brown's cottage, spending part of the time in cogitations as to the course he should pursue, and part in devouring his full share of the old woman's stolen fowl. He made no inquiries where it came from, indeed; and as he was a man without any scruples, it is not improbable that had he known the facts of the case his viands might have been eaten with even a greater relish, though he derived some satisfaction from forcing his hostess to let him be a partaker of her supper, which, it must be added, was much against her will. As soon as it was quite dark, the worthy captain set out for Mallington House; and, ringing at the bell, desired to see Mrs. Charlton. His appearance, just having come out of prison, was—to use a very expressive, though somewhat vulgar term—rather seedy; and the servant, after eying him for a moment, told him that Mrs. Charlton was engaged and could not see him. Captain Tankerville, however, was not a man to take a refusal easily, and assuming an authoritative air, he replied, "Go in and tell her, my good fellow, that I must see her on business of importance. I have not a card with me, but my name is Captain Tankerville, of the royal navy, a friend of her son's, from whom I have a message."

The servant, after some slight hesitation, obeyed, but took care to inform his mistress that the applicant was "rather an odd-looking

fellow." Nevertheless, there was something aristocratic in the name of Tankerville, and that, together with the dignity of a captain in the navy, proved a passport to Mrs. Charlton's presence. Captain Tankerville was accordingly admitted, and though very different people, perhaps no two persons were ever better qualified to deal with each other than that worthy gentleman and that fair lady. The captain opened his business with the utmost coolness and effrontery as soon as he had seated himself, informing Mrs. Charlton that he had received a message from her son, with the promise of a thousand pound from her, if he succeeded in effecting Alfred Latimer's liberation. "Now, my dear madam," he continued, "I think I can manage the matter, but the first thing to be ascertained is, whether you are disposed to ratify the engagement. A thousand pound, a thousand pound, you know—promises from a man in prison are worth nothing, and you may view the matter differently from my friend Latimer."

"I shall not grudge the thousand pound, sir," replied Mrs. Charlton, "if my son is actually liberated; but I certainly shall not pay it before."

"That's very prudent," replied Captain Tankerville, who seemed to have an instinctive appreciation of the lady's character; "it would not be pleasant to give a thousand pound, and have him hanged too."

"Good heaven! sir, you need not use such shocking expressions," exclaimed Mrs. Charlton; "I trust there is no chance whatever of such a dreadful event."

"I don't know, my dear madam," replied Tankerville, dryly; "he seems to think there is, and he's the best judge, I fancy; but business is business, and it is best to use plain terms. Although, of course, I do not expect you to be such a goose as to buy a pig in a poke, and pay before your son's out, you will not object, I dare say, to sign a little memorandum that I am to have the thousand pound if I get him out; then we shall both be pinn'd fast, you see. If you don't pay me, you might chance to be required to visit New South Wales for your share in the transaction; and then again, you have got a hold upon me, for I can't peach of you without subjecting myself to the same voyage, which, though a naval man, would not be agreeable to me."

Mrs. Charlton leaned her head upon her fair hand, and considered the matter with due deliberation, but at length she made up her mind to consent, and before showing his game any further, Captain Tankerville thought it best to have the paper drawn up and signed, which was accordingly done.

"And now, my dear madam," he continued, as soon as he had got the document in his pocket, "the next thing to be considered is the means."

"The means," repeated Mrs. Charlton, "I thought you had arranged all that already. You told me you thought it could be done."

"True, true," replied the worthy captain; "but when I say means, I would imply the means of war, my dear madam. I am a poor captain on half-pay, and I cannot be supposed to supply all the finances for such a transaction as this. The sum required won't be a trifle, I can tell you, and you can judge yourself what your

son's life is worth, as well as if you kept an insurance-office. There are jailers to be bribed, and turnkeys to be see'd—ay, and the governor of the prison himself, in all probability, to have his little recompense, for I don't see how we can get on without making him wink, with one eye, if not with both."

"Then I am very sorry it can't be done," said Mrs. Charlton, in a low but decided tone. "The thousand pound I can command, but I cannot go much further, for the truth is, I have not the money; and besides," she added, with a slight smile, "how could I tell if what way the money was applied? I could not be sure that it was used at all for the purpose intended."

Mrs. Charlton's mind rose highly in Captain Tankerville's estimation, and he mentally observed, "A very different lady from her daughter-in-law! We must try to give her some security." Nevertheless, before he proceeded in that course, he said, with a frank and good-humored air, "Oh, my dear madam, you must have some confidence in those you employ!"

"True; but, as you said just now, business is business, Captain Tankerville, and I always like to know how my money is spent."

"Well, as to some part of it," replied the worthy captain, "that can be done. You had better come over to the place yourself. I can prepare the way for you, and when the turnkeys are off duty, can have the honor of introducing them to you quietly, when you can pay them with your own hands, for they must be trusted, even if you don't trust me."

"Ay, but I have some hold upon them, Captain Tankerville," replied Mrs. Charlton; "if I can prove that they have taken money from me, and if they don't do what they promised, they can be punished, you know."

"Well, so be it," answered the captain; "you may be quite sure I shall do my best to get the thousand pounds; but some money must be had in hand even to begin with. They will never risk coming to see you, nor talking much with me either, without having something to make it worth their while."

"How much will be required, do you think?" asked Mrs. Charlton.

"Why, there will be the porter, and the principal turnkey, and one of his fellows," replied Tankerville, thoughtfully; "I should think three hundred pound would do."

"Three hundred pound!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, "what, to begin with?"

"You can't expect men to risk transportation for nothing," replied the captain.

"There is no risk of transportation for coming to speak with a lady at an inn," rejoined his fair companion. "In one word, Captain Tankerville, I must see my way clearly in this business. I am not a person easily deceived, and, besides, I have not got more than a hundred pound in the house."

"Well, we must make that go as far as it will," he answered, perfectly unconcerned; "we will meet at this place, Sturton, as soon as you like, Mrs. Charlton; and I trust with the hundred pound, if you will have the goodness to fetch it, I shall be able to get two of them at least to come and see you."

Mrs. Charlton went away, and returned in a

minute or two with the money, Captain Tankerville having amused himself in the meanwhile with taking a pinch of old very dry snuff out of a valuable gold snuff-box of the late Mr. Charlton's, which stood upon the mantel-piece, and then immediately putting the box in his pocket.

"Oh, very well, this is the money," he said, holding out his hand as soon as Mrs. Charlton appeared; but the lady, instead of giving him the notes, took up the pen, dipped it in the ink, and proceeded to write a regular receipt for one hundred pound, specifying in good set terms that it was to be applied to the purpose of bribing the jailers and turnkeys of Sturton Jail to facilitate the escape of Alfred Latimer, Esq. To this she requested Captain Tankerville's signature; but that gentleman hesitated, and Mrs. Charlton then added, holding the notes tight in her hand, "Our hold must be mutual upon each other, Captain Tankerville; I shall not pay a single penny without a similar receipt."

The captain laughed, and signed the paper, saying, in a complimentary tone, "Well, you are the cleverest woman I ever had to deal with." And, after some further conversation, in the course of which it was agreed that Mrs. Charlton should go over to Sturton on the following day, and sleep at the inn there, the worthy captain took his leave, assuring her that he would lose no time in commencing the preliminary negotiations. Instead, however, of returning to the cottage of Mother Brown, as he had proposed, he walked straight down to the inn at Mallington, where he indulged in a couple of bottles of sherry and a broiled fowl.

CHAPTER XC.

The yard of the prison was not so full as ordinary, and the greater part of the prisoners which tenanted it at the time were busily amusing themselves in one corner with different games which they had devised to pass the troublous hours of captivity, and which were in those days permitted to the unconvicted. It was curious to see how, in this state, old habits came back upon all—old habits, which in many instances must have dated very far back—some had even returned to their boyish days, two or three were playing at marbles, and one was spinning a peg-top. But we must not pause to particularize all their occupations; suffice it that while one part of the prison yard was thus engaged, the other displayed Jack Williams and Alfred Latimer—the former taking his short walk up and down, the latter keeping by his side and talking eagerly.

"It won't answer, Mr. Latimer, it won't answer," said Williams, in reply to something that his companion had just communicated. "They have proofs enough against us all, that's the truth; and we had better look at it straightforwardly. I had a hint yesterday afternoon that they have got hold of everything we took in the place where we hid them away."

"They haven't got what I had," answered Latimer eagerly; "that's all safe in France; and they found nothing upon me that they could swear to."

Williams looked at him steadfastly for a moment, and then said "You are thinking of getting yourself out of the scrape, and leaving us in; but it won't do, Mr. Latimer."

"I am thinking of no such thing," answered Alfred Latimer sharply, with the color mounting in his cheek; "such a thing never crossed my thoughts, but I was thinking it was a pity you hadn't been as careful as I was. Even now I don't see, if they cannot prove that you put the things there, how it can tell against you, or Brown either. Any one who took the things might have hidden them as well as you."

"There's some truth in that," answered Williams thoughtfully. "Well, let us hear what's your plan, with this business of the game?"

"Why the object is," answered Alfred Latimer, whose wit had been sharpened by his danger, "to account for two or three of the strong points against us. In the first place, if we are all in the same story, that we were just out bagging a few pheasants, which is very likely, seeing that we have all been in the same scrape before, it will show how we all came to go across the water together, and will knock down that cowardly rascal Maltby's evidence. Then, again," he said, "it will show a cause for the blood upon my clothes; and almost everything else will be affected by it, one way or another. So you see I was not thinking of getting out of the scrape and leaving you in it, though I cannot fancy what good it could do you to have me hanged as well as yourself."

"Perhaps not," answered Williams, with a grim smile, "but we are all in the same boat, Mr. Latimer, and must sink or swim together—not that I mean to say, if judge or jury were inclined to let you off, for any want of proof, that I would speak a single word to stop them. That's all fair, but if you were to contrive any plan for saving yourself without giving us a chance, I would spoil that for you, I can tell you. Now let's think of this scheme a little more. It's not a bad one, and we may as well let it go on, for it may make the folks doubt, and that's something; but the hope is so very faint a one that we must leave nothing else untried."

"But why is it so faint?" asked Alfred Latimer; "Maltby did not see us go into the house—nobody saw you and Brown hide the rings and things, and on me they have found nothing but ten guineas in my own purse."

"But they found well-nigh a thousand with me and Brown, in Wenlock Wood," answered Williams, "so we should have that to account for, any way, and your story won't match."

"That's awkward, indeed," answered Alfred Latimer; "but as the game is there by this time, I dare say, it may as well stay—what's to be done now, I wonder."

"Oh, yes; the game had better be left there, and we had better keep to the same story, if the worst comes to the worst. But the first thing is to try to get out of this place."

"Ay, but how is that to be done," asked Alfred Latimer; "I should be glad enough to get out, if I saw any chance of it."

Williams gave his under jaw a twist, as if there had been something in his mouth, and then answered "It is to be done, Mr. Latimer,

and though the less that is said about it the better, yet, as you must have some share in the thing, and must give us some help, I may as well tell you part of the plan, especially as we can never tell how long we may have an opportunity of talking over it, for if these fellows in the jail knew what they were about, they would never let you and I be walking up and down here, laying our heads together in this way; and if the visiting justices hear of it, they'll have a finger in the pie, that's clear. Wait till that fellow's gone by, and I'll tell you."

One of their fellow-prisoners at this moment came up, and asked Williams a question of no great importance, to which he obtained a short reply, and then moved away. As soon as he was gone, the fellow continued, "That wall's a good height, you see, but yet a ladder could soon be made that would reach to the top, if we could only get some thin but strong cord."

"I could soon get that," answered Alfred Latimer; "my wife would bring that in—what sort of cord do you want, how thick?"

"It doesn't much matter," answered the man, "how thick, so that she can carry it, without being seen; and if it be strongly twisted, I shall have to work it up into the thickness I want, myself. That would be soon done, if I could sit to it long enough at a time; but the people are always coming into my cell, and as I have got no light to work at night, I should be obliged to do it by the feel."

"Oh, I'll get her to bring me in, a phosphorus-box and some candles," said Alfred Latimer; "but when you have made the ladder, I don't see how you could use it. You are locked up at night, I suppose, as well as myself; and if you were to try it in the day, you'd be stopped in five minutes."

"There's such a thing as mortar between stones," answered Williams, dryly; "and such a thing as working the mortar out; Brown's at it, and I shall take my turn by and by; we are half way through the wall already, as near as I can calculate; and in two days more, we shall be within half an inch of the outside."

"Why, Brown and you aren't in the same cell, surely," said the young gentleman.

"Oh, no, not at night," answered Williams, "but during the airing time, as they call it, as our cells are close by the yard door, and as there is no means of getting out that way, they don't much watch, if we go in for a minute or two, and then nobody notices if he goes into his cell or mine."

"But how will he get into your cell when you want to get away," asked Alfred Latimer.

"Oh, we've a plan for that," replied Williams; "that won't be difficult to manage."

"And how am I to manage, Williams," demanded his companion; "it seems to me that you have been laying out for yourselves to get out of the scrape, and leave me in it."

"I shouldn't be telling you all about it, if I had," answered Williams; "but you must do something for yourself, Mr. Latimer. You shall know whenever all is quite ready, and the time fixed, then you must pay one of the turnkeys well to let you come at night and have a little private talk with me. You know a stout swivel-eyed fellow, with a hook-nose:

he's the man you must speak to. Just give him a hint that you want to consult me about our defence. Now, for ten pounds he won't mind letting you do that, for they think that's all fair; and to make everything sure, you can tell him he may lock you in, and come for you in a couple of hours again. He did so for Brown two or three nights ago, for the little sum I could give him, which was but two guineas."

"How did you get that?" asked Alfred Latimer. "They took all I had from me, and let me have all I want on my mother's account. The blackguards searched me to the skin."

"So they did me," answered Williams; "and if I had had two guineas about me, they would have soon found it; but I had what was worth more than two guineas—a certain bit of paper belonging to a friend of yours, one Mr. Morton, for which at one time he offered a reward of fifty pounds. I had slipped it in between my jacket and the lining, where they never thought of looking; and after I had been in for awhile I sent for Mr. Morton, on pretence of wanting to confess something to him, and then asked him if he was willing to give the same sum for the paper as ever. He was glad enough to do it, so I got the money and he got the paper—but that's nothing to do with what we were talking about. I wanted to try that turnkey, for I've a strange notion of picking out men by their faces, and I thought I was pretty sure of my mark. I have seldom seen a fellow with a swivel eye that hadn't got some sort of a twist inside as well as out. You may talk to him, therefore, quite safely, the first time you can get him into your room, and he'll do what you want any time for ten pound. Then when I tell you all's ready, you can get him to bring you to my cell about one or two in the morning, and while you are locked in there, as he thinks, we can be walking away towards Portsmouth."

"But won't he see the hole you have made in the wall," asked Alfred Latimer.

"Oh! dear, no," replied Williams. "In the first place there is never a stone out of its place when they come in, and besides the bed-head is against it."

The younger of the two villains ruminated for a minute or two over what he had heard. The scheme seemed to him certainly feasible, and he had heard of such things being attempted with success, but yet the risk seemed to him so great that he said at length, "Won't it be better, Jack, to keep this shift till the last—I mean, till the trial is over?"

"Why, you fool," answered Jack Williams, sharply, "we shall be in irons then. It's a wonder we ar'n't now, and only because there are one or two old women amongst the justices, who are trying what they call a new system here, in order to reclaim us, as they say—devilish little chance of reclaiming me, I think, irons or no irons." He and his companion both laughed, and he proceeded—"Brown got his darbies off yesterday by good behavior, and we must take good care to use our legs and arms while they are at liberty, so you get the cord and the phœphorus-box and the lights—one of those long rollers of paper will be better than candles—furnish yourself with all the money you can scrape together, and we shall do the matter easily enough. If I were you, Mr. Latimer, however,

I would not neglect the other scheme. That can do no harm, and we might be stopped, you know. Another thing is, I don't see why you should be worse off, if it does come to a trial, than any of us, and as things stand now you are so, for that young lady, that Miss Charlton, knows nothing of me or Brown, but her evidence may be devilish unlucky for you. I should think, when you are so nearly related to her, that you could easily get her out of the way."

"Not so easy," answered Alfred Latimer, thoughtfully; "but I'll try—yes, that I will; I'll try. She's kind enough, but there's a great deal of determination about her, too, when she takes a thing into her head."

"I'd try every way," answered Williams; "but here comes Dick, the other turnkey, as if he were making for us. Don't say a word to him, mind, for, though he's devilish civil, yet you'll find him a dogged fellow, who won't take a sixpence."

The turnkey beckoned to Alfred Latimer as he approached, and told him that his lady was waiting to see him, in very reverential tones. There must be something most extraordinary in gold that the very name and reputation of wealth should obtain the respect which virtuous poverty cannot command.

"Plate sin in gold,
And the strong lance of justice buttless breaks;
Armed in rags, a pignu straw doth pierce it,"

said the great poet. But there's something more than all this, it is not alone immunity that can be won by wealthy vice, but reverence; and virtue ungilded can command but scanty courtesy. When we doff our hats most humbly, 'tis to the purse in a man's pocket, not to the gem in his heart; and, let him be ever so loaded with crimes, the awful power of riches shall still affect all who approach him, and the very hangman tie the noose more reverently. Oh, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar! thou wert a politic king, but scarcely didst thou know thyself the extent to which thy decrees would be obeyed, for we still, even at the end of more than two thousand years, bow down and worship the golden image thou didst set up.

Alfred Latimer, to return from our didactics, followed the worthy jailer into the prison, and in a few minutes was in his room again with Lucy, who seemed to have gained strength, notwithstanding all she had suffered. Lucy had a long tale to tell, for, since she had last seen him, many things had happened. Mrs. Charlton had opened a communication with her, had been to see her, and, upon the strength of the occasion, had been as gentle and kind, and sweetly maternal as possible. Not choosing to visit the prison again too soon, the lady had instructed her son's wife to communicate to him secretly the efforts that were making to liberate him, and to warn him to be prepared to take advantage of whatever might be done on his behalf at a moment's notice. Lucy had been instructed, too, to convey to him the means of disguising his person, and over her own ordinary dress, she now wore a second gown and shawl, which she had been told to leave with him. She had received all these directions, and promised to follow them, with her natural gentleness, but Mrs. Charlton remarked, in their interview,

sort of apathetic coldness, which she attributed, perhaps, to the right cause, and feared that it might interfere with Lucy's exertions on Alfred Latimer's behalf. Now, Mrs. Charlton never scrupled, when she had an object in view, to say what was not, and, therefore, in taking leave of her daughter-in-law, whom she might have treated at any other time as the dirt beneath her feet, or as a politician treats an elector who has served him, and can serve him no more, she kissed her tenderly, adding, "You must be very well aware, my dear Lucy, that nothing would induce me to take all these steps, even for a son, were I not fully convinced that he is perfectly innocent. The truth is," she continued, seeing some surprise in Lucy's face, "poor Alfred, whose wild ways you well know, had engaged to go out with these men, to shoot in the preserves here; it was very wrong and very foolish, certainly, but more a boyish frolic than anything else. However, he had nothing to do with the rest of the sad affair. That they did alone when he left them, but as he was seen with them just before and just after, there is no means of proving his innocence, unless they would confess the truth, and even then their words would not be believed; besides, these people are always so malicious. But I have heard quite enough to show me the true state of the case, and that poor Alfred was never nearer to the house than the willow-ground by the water."

Had Lucy been very clear-sighted, had she had a full knowledge of all the evidence that had been given, she would easily have perceived that Mrs. Charlton's story could not be true. But what we wish for, that we believe—at least in nine cases out of ten—and she gladly caught at the hope afforded her that her suspicions had done her husband injustice. If Mrs. Charlton, she thought, with full information in regard to the whole, could be perfectly convinced that her son was innocent, why should she doubt it? And though vague and shadowy suspicions would still haunt her, and facts occur to her remembrance which shook her trust, yet still she labored, and successfully, to explain them away, and to convince herself of that which she wished to be true. She thus returned to her husband with warmer feelings and a more eager desire to serve and save him than when she left him, and she detailed all the information she possessed as rapidly as possible, stripped off the gown and shawl in haste, and aided to hide them amongst his clothes.

It may easily be conceived that the tidings were joyful to Alfred Latimer, and he loaded poor Lucy with caresses, calling her the best and dearest girl in the world. He did not forget, however, the conversation which had taken place between him and Williams, and judging that it would be much wiser in every respect to carry on the scheme of escape which had been developed between them, in case that of his mother and Tankerville should fail, he directed Lucy to bring him the phosphorus-bag and taper, and inquired eagerly for the money which had been spoken of at their last interview. It was instantly produced by Lucy, neatly rolled up into the smallest possible compass. But Alfred Latimer had still directions to give, and

after meditating for a moment, and saying to himself, "Even if this scheme of Tankerville's succeeds, I must not let Williams and Brown know what is going on, and, to hide it all, I must seem as busy about their plan as ever; but in case both fail, I had better try to get the evidence against me out of the way," he proceeded aloud, "There's one thing, dear Lucy, I wish could be done. If you could give my mother a hint that, at all events, she had better persuade Louisa to marry and go abroad for awhile, I should be very glad. Louisa would do it, I am sure, if she's asked, and my mother can always coax her to do a thing, if she takes the right way. If young John Blackmore, too, were gone, it would be all the better. Maltby, I am afraid, they can't get hold of, for I have heard that they have shut him up."

"But do you think Miss Charlton will consent?" asked Lucy, doubtfully; "she is not with Mrs. Charlton now, you know."

"The devil she isn't!" cried her husband; "I suppose, then, my mother has quarrelled with her like a fool; but I'm sure, after all, Louisa could be persuaded, for she could never wish me to be condemned when I am innocent."

He said the words boldly enough, for he had accustomed himself to the assertion, and even to the lawyer who had visited him, to prepare his defence, he had never admitted the fact of his guilt. Nevertheless, there was some slight hesitation observable as he spoke; and Lucy asked, in a low and anxious tone, while her heart sank with doubt as to what his answer might be, "And are you really innocent, indeed, Alfred?"

Not more than a fortnight before, such a question would have cast her husband into a fearful state of agitation, for remorse at that time had mingled with apprehension; but selfishness had now resumed her full sway, and his only thought was to save himself, whatever might be the means required. He answered, then, vehemently, almost eagerly, "To be sure I am. How could you ever doubt it, girl! It is only that appearances may be against me. I can tell you, Lucy, there's many an innocent man in England hanged upon what they call circumstantial evidence; and here, because two or three things are proved, which might have had something to do with the robbery, but which could be easily accounted for, I am already treated like a guilty person, and should very likely be found guilty by the jury."

Lucy replied nothing, but murmured to herself, "Thank God!—thank God!"

"Thank God that I am likely to be hanged!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer.

"No, no!" she cried, placing her hands upon his arm—"thank God that you are innocent, Alfred."

"You should never have doubted it!" he answered, pushing her from him; "but that does not matter," he continued; "you tell my mother what I say, bid her go on with what she's about with Tankerville; but in case the worst comes to the worst, let her get Louisa out of the way as soon as possible; she can easily manage it if she tries, and then it will be pretty nearly all sure."

Lucy was pained, for every moment showed

her more clearly that he thought of nothing but himself; but still the increasing assurance that he was innocent was the greatest of comforts to her. Whatever she might have to suffer herself—whatever he might make her undergo—whatever his harshness, or the selfishness that she too clearly perceived, might inflict upon her—she could bear with calmness, with fortitude, with resignation, provided the awful fear was removed from her mind that she was willingly aiding the escape of her father's murderer.

And after having made him repeat all his instructions, she again took leave of him to depart. A momentary fit of tenderness seized him at the last instant of her stay; and he even so far forgot himself as to ask her to remain a little longer. Did I say he forgot himself!—perhaps it was wrong to say so; for, after all, it was but a softer kind of selfishness, less hard, less brutal than the other. He felt a comfort, a relief, in her society. There was something in the clinging affection of the poor girl, in her devotion to him in that hour of peril, that seemed to cheer and mitigate the dark solitude of crime. It seemed as if, while she was there—with her love and her tenderness—she who had no share in the deeds he had done—that he was not so utterly separated by the darkness of his crime from the rest of human creatures—that the barrier was not so completely fixed against him—that there was something innocent, and good, and true, that loved him yet, and it was a mighty consolation. He seated himself by her—he threw his arms round her—he leaned his head upon her shoulder, while her hand lay clasped in his; and as they were thus placed, one of the jailers suddenly entered, perhaps with some doubt as to what might be the object of Lucy's visit. All seemed natural and easy, however—both started at the interruption, and Alfred Latimer withdrew his arm; and the turnkey, making some excuse for his entrance, returned to the rooms of the governor, from which he had come. Shortly after Lucy quitted the prison; but this time she went on foot, and took her way towards the best inn in the place.

CHAPTER XCI.

THE Bell at Sturton was, as the reader is aware, a large and handsome inn. It had multitudes of bed-rooms, it had multitudes of sitting-rooms, multitudes of waiters and chamber-maids, and, amongst all its multitudes, the greatest was the multitude of bells. There they hung in three tremendous long rows; and had the bell-hanger but possessed a musical ear, and arranged them properly, and with due discretion, one might have heard, when the house was full, some of the finest pieces of music that Beethoven or Haydn ever produced, played from morning till night. There were eight full octaves, and they surely might have been put to a much more harmonious purpose than they were by the guests who continued ringing the changes upon them all day long. I throw this out as a hint to all future keepers of great inns, or possessors of large flocks of sheep. Depend upon it, if they but arrange their bells, in thirds and fifths, there would be

much more harmony in their several establishments.

The great bell of the Bell, however, was the bell of the house-door, which was so sized and situated that every waiter and every chamber-maid, unless deep in wine, love, or sleep, could not avoid hearing it, wherever he or she might be, from the remote garret of Boots down to the profound storehouses of Bacchus.

One night, about the period of which we have just been writing, towards half-past nine, *post-meridum*, that great bell rang vehemently. The roll of wheels had previously called forth the ostler, and now, out of sundry chambers, darted two or three waiters in black silk-stockings, like spiders darting along the toils at the first touch of a fly's foot. The glass doors were thrown open, the landlord himself was summoned, and the housekeeper lighted a bed-candle. The first object that presented itself to the eyes of landlord and waiters, when they rushed out upon the step, was a traveling chariot of somewhat antique construction, and apparently of a green color. The lamps were lighted, and the postboy stood beside his horse already undoing the harness. Ostler was in a hurry to call out "horses on," but the head-waiter opened the door of the vehicle, politely saying, "Won't you please to alight, sir!"

"What's o'clock?" said a voice from within. The waiter took a step back, looked at his watch by the light in the hall, saw the time, added half an hour, to give the inn a better chance, and replied, "Ten o'clock, sir."

"Then I'll stop here to-night," replied the gentleman from within; "though, dickory, dickory, dock, the mouse must have run up the clock, for it was only eight when we left, and that's but ten miles."

"This way, sir, this way," said the waiter, without any reply to the gentleman's last observation. But our good friend, Mr. Quatterly, who stepped out of the carriage as the man spoke, did not think fit to follow him immediately, but remained for the space of about three minutes, paying the postboy, and seeing sundry tin-cases and small green leather boxes, which he had with him in the interior of the carriage, safely brought out and carried on before him. He then duly followed where the waiter led, Mr. Gatten's housekeeper exclaiming "Number forty-two, Jackson," as the party passed; and, ushered up to the first floor, Mr. Quatterly was introduced into a sitting-room, the neatness of which, together with the sparkling fire in the grate, were very satisfactory to his corporeal feelings. He looked at his watch, nevertheless; it was a large, round, turnip-shaped commodity, which told the time with great exactness, and shaking his finger at the waiter, he exclaimed, "You vagabond! you said it was ten o'clock, and it wants twenty minutes."

"Bless my heart, sir," cried the waiter, twitching out his own chronometer, as if horribly shocked at the thought of such an error, and then looking confounded, he added, "Really, I beg pardon, sir, I made a mistake, that light there below is so very bad. Will you take tea or supper, sir!"

"Ay, I understand, I understand," said Mr. Quatterly, good humoredly, "but you shall have sixpence less for cheating me. I thought we

couldn't have taken all that time, or I must have been dreaming, like David Dribble, who dreamed he drove a dragon, for it seemed as if the horses were going as fast as they could—tea or supper! I'll have dinner first, if you please, for I have not put a morsel between my grinders since seven o'clock this morning. Let me have what can be soonest ready—a little soup, no fish—I hate fish in the midland counties, and anything else that the house can afford, together with a bottle of sherry and an apple-tart, not baked above three days, if you please, Mr. Waiter."

"Baked this morning, sir," said the waiter. "At ten o'clock!" inquired Mr. Quatterly, sily. "Now be so good as to put those boxes in order upon that table—regularly, regularly, if you please; the big ones behind, the little ones before; the light compans in front, and the grenadiers behind. And now show me my bed-room. I always like to see the thing I have got to lie upon."

"This way, sir, this way," said the waiter. "Chambermaid, forty-nine." And candle in hand, he lighted Mr. Quatterly about ten steps along the passage, towards the door of a bedroom on the opposite side. In ten steps, however, very wonderful things may happen, and in this instance something did happen which surprised Mr. Quatterly a good deal. A door opened on the same side as his own sitting-room, and a head and face, with a part of the body, appeared at the aperture. Mr. Quatterly saw the countenance distinctly, for the waiter held the light in a very illuminating direction, and there were the precise and identical features of his worthy and accomplished friend, Captain Tankerville, which, though withdrawn again as soon as seen, produced from Mr. Quatterly's chest the significant interjection, "Ah, ah!"

"Sir?" said the waiter.

"Number forty-five," said Mr. Quatterly, "who's staying in forty-five, waiter?"

"Mrs. Charlton, sir, the Honorable Mrs. Charlton," replied the officer in black silk stockings.

"Ah! when the pie was opened the birds began to sing," said Mr. Quatterly, and without any more pellucid comment upon the information he had received, the worthy solicitor followed the waiter and the chambermaid, by whom they were just then joined, into the bedroom, examined the bed, ordered the mattress to be put uppermost, called the chambermaid "my dear," and then returned to his sitting-room, pausing every second step to think for a moment. When he had reached the door, his cogitation seemed to have arrived at some result, for he turned to the waiter, saying, "Get the dinner, and serve it. I shall be back by the time it is on the table. And going into the room he took his hat, and issued forth from the inn on foot.

In the streets of Sturton Mr. Quatterly walked on, looking to the right and left at the different houses he passed, as if he were enjoying a strange town—one of the greatest pleasures to a thoughtful man that can be conceived. It is so full of mysteries, so replete with work for the imagination, that I could easily find an excuse for a man spending his whole life in visiting strange towns, even if he never saw

any more of them than the outsides of the houses. However, Mr. Quatterly, it would appear, was differently occupied, and after having gone for a couple of hundred yards, or somewhat more, he crossed over to a chemist's shop, which was one of the few that was open in the place, and walked in, with a low bow to the proprietor thereof, who was standing taking leave of his goods and chattels for the night.

"Pray, sir," he said, "can you inform me where the mayor is to be found? and, if not, which is the house of the nearest magistrate?" The chemist did both, and the magistrate's dwelling being near at hand, and the mayor's far away, Mr. Quatterly proceeded to the door of the former, and was soon after admitted. His visit was not long, for in about five minutes he issued forth again, and, in all, was about a quarter of an hour absent from the inn. His dinner did not seem to have made much progress during his absence, for the cloth was still unalaid. But all was bustle as soon as he summoned the waiters by the bell, and in about ten minutes more the soup was before him. That part of the feast was discussed, and Mr. Quatterly was entering upon the wing of a fowl, when one of the host of waiters came in, and inquired, "Pray, sir, is your name Quatterly?"

"It used to be," replied the worthy solicitor, "and if it has been changed, it was done without my consent."

"Mrs. Charlton, sir," said the waiter, "would be glad to speak with you for a few minutes, with her compliments."

"Well, then," answered Mr. Quatterly, "pray tell Mrs. Charlton, my friend, that I am particularly occupied at this moment, but that I will wait upon her in a quarter of an hour, with my compliments;" and Mr. Quatterly applied himself to his meal again with all due devotion. He did not eat much, it is true, but what he did eat was with a right good will, and he added four glasses of sherry to the meat, and a glass and a half to the apple tart, then raising himself, and rubbing his hands, he thanked heaven for a good meal, and directed the waiter to inform Mrs. Charlton that he was ready to attend her. The lady sent back word that she was eager to see him as soon as he could come, and the minute after Mr. Quatterly entered the sitting-room number forty-five.

With one of her sweetest and most engaging smiles, and the utmost courtesy of demeanor, the lady received her guest, and declared that she was delighted to see him, besought him to take a seat by her on the sofa, and spared no blandishments to produce a favorable impression. But as we have shown before, Mr. Quatterly combined with very great simplicity of manners, and a peculiar fundness for many very juvenile things, a shrewd and keen intellect, great knowledge of the world, and a vast experience of rogues and vagabonds of every class and degree; and all Mrs. Charlton's arts were lost upon him, for he saw through and through her, as if she had been a piece of rock crystal cut and polished. "Delighted, my dear madam," he replied, "to renew my acquaintance with you under less disagreeable circumstances than those with which it commenced. I trust I see you in good health."

"As well as I can be expected to be," replied

the lady. "Ah, that was a terrible day, indeed, Mr. Quatterly. I was quite beside myself, but even the timid pigeon, you know, will peck when its young ones are assailed."

"The hen pigeon, madam," replied Mr. Quatterly, somewhat dryly; "but I did not think you were beside yourself at all. You seemed to me to do it all very well."

Mrs. Charlton did not altogether like his answer. Some people are not well pleased to have their characters fully understood, and after pausing for a moment, and nibbling her pretty lip, she said "I was very glad to hear from a friend that you were here, Mr. Quatterly, for I thought that you might be the means"—

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you," replied the solicitor, "but the friend, I presume, is Captain Tankerville."

"Ye—s," said Mrs. Charlton, with some hesitation, "poor man, he is—he is," and there she stopped.

"Exactly, ma'am," rejoined Mr. Quatterly, ending the sentence for her, "he is a swindler, ma'am, and a felon."

"Good gracious, I hope not!" exclaimed Mrs. Charlton, in affected surprise and consternation; "he seemed to take a great deal of interest in my son, and so"—

"It is exactly as I say, my dear madam," replied Mr. Quatterly. "Your son, I beg leave to say, he pigeoned in the most egregious manner, and was one of those who greatly aided to lead him or drive him into acts which have produced his present unpleasant situation. As for himself, I am sorry for him, poor fellow, for he has been but a tool in the hands of others, I am quite sure."

"I can assure you he is perfectly innocent," said Mrs. Charlton, earnestly, "that is to say, of the offences with which he is charged. That he was very culpable in going out at night to shoot the earl's game I admit, but that was his only offence."

"Then let it be his defence likewise, my dear madam," answered the solicitor; "prove that, and he's quite safe."

"But how can one prove it?" demanded the lady. "Meeting with these men on his way back, he crossed over in the boat without knowing anything of what they had done. But who could suppose, for a moment, my dear Mr. Quatterly, that any one would go and marry in the morning the daughter of a man he had murdered at night?"

"It is not a usual proceeding, indeed," answered the solicitor; "and I trust it may be, as you say, impossible. Nevertheless, his situation is, indeed, very awkward, and how he is to get out of it, I don't see. It will depend upon thirteen contingencies, namely, twelve jurors and the judge. A hanging judge and a hungry jury are hard things to deal with. But we may have something more favorable in this case, and I trust such may be the result, not alone for your sake, but for that of Miss Charlton, to whom the whole business must be most painful."

"Ay, that is just what I wanted to speak to you about, Mr. Quatterly," said the lady; "it will be very terrible to poor dear Louisa, and still more to Alfred, who has ever looked upon her as a sister, to see her appear as a witness

against him, whose testimony will be very likely to turn the scale, and doom him to death. Do you not think, Mr. Quatterly, that it would be much better for her, and for all parties, if she were at once to give her hand to Lord Mallington, and take a little tour on the continent. It would do the health of both good, I am sure."

"May I ask, madam, if you consult me as a friend, a lawyer, or a physician?" inquired Mr. Quatterly.

The natural impulse of Mrs. Charlton's art, if I may use such a contradictory expression, would have led her to reply at once, "Oh! as a friend, of course," but a moment's thought stopped the words on her lips, and she said "as a solicitor."

"Six-and-eightpence, then, madam," said Mr. Quatterly, dryly; and Mrs. Charlton, with a smile, took out her purse, and laid seven shillings on the table. The worthy solicitor swept it up, put it in one huge pocket, and drew forth fourpence from the other, which he duly handed across to the lady. "Now, madam," he said, "I am your lawyer, and in that capacity I beg leave to reply, that the very best thing for your son, be he guilty or innocent, would be to get some of the witnesses out of the way, especially Miss Charlton. The lad Blackmore is another who may be disposed of with advantage, and those are the only two you can deal with. But you must excuse me if I decline to undertake the operative part of the affair, as it is out of my practice. I can't blame you if you do it, but I should blame myself very much if I did."

"But surely, my dear Mr. Quatterly, you will not refuse to take a message from me to Louisa and the earl," said Mrs. Charlton, "or to urge them most strongly to hasten their nuptials, for which they have my fullest consent—and—"

"And go to the continent," said Mr. Quatterly. "Well, my dear madam, I will take the message, and though I do not promise to urge them most strongly, yet I will say nothing against it."

"Oh, pray do urge them," said Mrs. Charlton, eagerly; "I am sure a word from you would do a great deal."

"My dear madam," rejoined the solicitor, "I never yet saw a man whom it was necessary to urge to take a glass of wine if he was thirsty, and liked wine, or to take a walk if it was a fine day, and he liked walking; no, nor any two young people either, who were in love with each other, to marry at once, if there was not the slightest impediment in nature. I, therefore, think your proposition has a very good chance, even if it come plain and unadorned from my lips."

Mrs. Charlton mused for an instant, and then replied, as Mr. Quatterly rose and stood before her, about to depart, "I am sure you will do what you can; but now tell me about Captain Tankerville."

"I have nothing to tell, my dear madam," replied Mr. Quatterly; "you have his character, according to my best powers of portraiture—he's a swindler and a felon. He fleeced your son, and he's now fleecing you, I suspect; or at least would be if he weren't in jail, which he is by this time, if the magistrates have done their duty."

"Good gracious!" cried Mrs. Charlton; "I can hardly believe he's such a character."

"The powers of credulity required are not very great," replied the solicitor; "but nevertheless, it is so. And now, my dear madam, good night, for I have a great many papers to look over."

"Well, thank God!" said Mrs. Charlton, as soon as Mr. Quatterly was gone, "I have seen both the porter and the turnkey myself, and know where to find them, and how to deal with them, so it's no great matter. If he's in jail, it will save money."

CHAPTER XCII

THE morning was bright and beautiful, though an occasional shower, more like one of those which check the sunshine of an April day, swept over the sky, and passed away again, leaving the whole world sparkling. Breakfast was just over at the rectory; Dr. Western had gone into his library to speak to some of his poor; Mrs. Evelyn had retired from the breakfast-room, whether on business or from discretion I cannot tell; and Morton and Louisa stood together at the window, gazing over the pleasant scene before their eyes, catching the glistening river through a break in the shrubs, and gaining a view beyond that again of Mallington Park, with its sweeps of woodland, and wide broken lawns, and a gray angle of the hall itself appearing from behind a mass of giant chestnuts perched upon a gentle rise. It was natural for Louisa's mind to be led on by the sight she beheld into the future with which it associated itself. There was to be the dwelling of her after years—there was the ancestral mansion of him she loved so deeply—there the spot in which all the bright imaginations of youth, all the fond visions of affection, congregated themselves before the eye of hope. Was it unnatural that, with so many dark and painful circumstances as then surrounded her, she should feel a yearning for the coming time—a longing to hurry forward to the period when the cloud should be passed away, and the sun shine all bright again? It is seldom, very seldom that the bright fancies of early love, that all the ornaments and gay colors with which we decorate the object of early affection, are found to retain their lustre after the first glow of enthusiasm has passed. Seldom indeed that the qualities which we attribute to the being whom we love are not found, more or less, to be the work of our own imagination. But it had not been so with Louisa and with Morton. His character, like his circumstances, had only seemed the brighter from every day that passed. He had come to her in lowly guise, without pretensions and without claim; he had won her regard as a simple gentleman, with no ostensible title to aspire to the hand of the rich heiress; and it was not till that hand was promised that she had learned that he was the possessor of wealth superior to her own, and of claims to a rank which she never dreamed of seeking. Thus, too, with his heart and mind, the treasures with which they were stored, the nobility with which they were dignified, had revealed themselves by degrees. Plain and un-

affected in manner, seeking neither to dazzle nor to strike, hiding rather than revealing the richer things within, every day he had grown upon her affection, and advanced in her esteem. At the same time he, on his part, summed up all his feelings towards her by saying that he had come to Mallington in search of an idle name, and had found a real treasure by the way. Loved her he certainly had from a very early period of their acquaintance. He had soon learned to think her the most beautiful, and what is of more importance, the most interesting being he had ever beheld; but now such sensations had warmed by intimacy into a passion as ardent as it was deep, and as he stood there and gazed with her from the window on the scene I have described, he felt even a more eager longing than she did to hasten forward to the time when the tie that was to unite them for ever should be theirs, and every cold restraint and worldly barrier done away. They spoke not, indeed, of such sensations, though their conversation might glance to the future, even while dealing with the things of the present; yet if eyes are books in which men can read the secrets of the heart, there were looks that told the tale of what was passing in the bosoms of each, even while they were talking of more indifferent things.

What might have been said next I cannot tell, but certainly a more propitious moment could not have been found for any proposal that might tend to hasten their union, but as they were still gazing forth, and speaking of the changes and improvements that were by this time going on at Mallington Park, the green chariot of worthy Mr. Quatterly drove in through the gates, and stopped at the door before their eyes. His voice was then heard in the hall, giving various directions for the safe custody of the numerous little boxes which the chariot contained, and the next moment he was ushered into the room by Dr. Western's old servant, one of whose arms was heavily laden with the cases by which the worthy solicitor set such store. With an air of mock ceremony and reverence, Mr. Quatterly advanced towards the young nobleman, bowing profoundly, and then taking Morton's extended hand, he shook it heartily, seizing upon Louisa's next, and gallantly raising it to his lips.

"My lord," he said, "I have the honor of informing your lordship that all your lordship's affairs are finally wound up, settled, and arranged. You are now, my lord, recognized by all parties as the undisputed possessor, in fee simple, of the Mallington Hall estate, as both heir at law and next of kin to the late Earl of Mallington, to every shiver of whose real and personal estate, goods, chattels, messuages, tenements, and effects, of every kind, sort, or description whatsoever, your lordship has an indisputable, an undisputed claim, as well as to the style, title, and honors, with all the rights and privileges thereunto appertaining of Earl of Mallington, as I am ready to prove by the contents of those green boxes, and upon which I sincerely congratulate your lordship."

"There's an harangue," he continued, turning to Louisa, while Morton inquired, "But what's in the red box, my dear friend. I hope nothing of the Pandora kind."

"Faith, I don't know," answered Mr. Quatterly; "let's see—yes, that's the right one. But there are two more which he has not brought in. In this, my lord, there is a very dangerous document. I scarcely dare to pronounce the name of it in a lady's presence—it is a draft neither for money nor of wine, but of a thing which I will whisper in this fair lady's ear, lest she should be too terribly shocked—a marriage settlement," said Mr. Quatterly. "Having received a hint that such a thing might be needful, I thought there could be no harm in having a little conversation on the subject with my friend Quin, the solicitor of the guardians and executors. The whole matter was settled with the most illegal haste and irregular rapidity. The draft made as short as possible, much to my own loss, and that of my clerks, laid before Bell, flaws discovered and corrected, the deed engrossed, and the draft lies at the top, and the parchment at the bottom; if it is not wanted it can't be helped," and Mr. Quatterly rubbed his hands and chuckled.

"Shall we look at the papers, Louisa?" said Morton with a smile.

"Oh, no, no, Edmond," she replied; "I can have nothing to do with them."

"Oh, but you must have to do with them, sweet lady, as far as signing them goes," answered Mr. Quatterly; "as to all the rest, I believe that can be settled between myself and Dr. Western. This noble personage's instructions I received before, and they have been attended to to the letter."

"The annuity?" asked Morton.

"Yes," replied Mr. Quatterly, "a thousand a year extra, which is nine hundred and ninety-nine pounds, some shillings, more than she deserves. However, I have nothing more to do but to obey. Don't let me forget, though, that I have a proposal to make from her to you two young people. I saw her last night at Sturton, you must know, consorting with a certain Captain Tankerville, whom I have taken care shall be laid in limbo again. That's one good thing done, and this time I have so framed my charge that he will be transported for life, not hanged, as would have been the case if I had pursued the other business—I'm not fond of hanging people, my dear. I can't even bear to see a mouse caught in a mouse-trap, its large black eyes look so reproachfully at one."

Louisa's face grew grave in a moment, and Morton inquired "But what of Mrs. Charlton? Any new demand, I wonder?"

"Oh dear, no," answered Mr. Quatterly; "a simple suggestion, conceived in the most tender and considerate spirit, with a regard to the eagerness and impatience of two young people on the eve of marriage. She proposes, my dear lady, that you and this noble lord should, with her full consent and approbation, be linked together in Hymen's fetters without the least delay or hesitation, and take what is called the wedding tour—as if matrimony were nothing better than a roundabout at a fair—on the continent, or to any other sweet and delectable spot, at a distance, that you may fix upon."

Morton smiled, but Louisa looked gravely up, saying, "But that is impossible, you know, my dear sir, for I shall have to appear at this dreadful trial."

Mr. Quatterly took Louisa's hand in his, and gazed at her with a kind and an affectionate look, while he replied, "That is just what Mrs. Charlton wishes to prevent, my dear lady; and as she has a glorious and penetrating view into human nature, she judged that such a proposal would neither be very unpleasant to you, nor to my noble friend here."

Louisa moved to the table, and seated herself, leaning her brow upon her hand; and for several minutes she made no reply, while Morton gazed at her, feeling the struggle which was going on in her breast the more from that which was taking place in his own. After a long pause, he approached and took her hand, and Louisa, looking up in his face, suffered him to see that her beautiful eyes were full of tears. "What shall I say, Edmond?" she inquired, in a low tone. Before he could answer, however, Dr. Western entered the room, and Louisa turned towards him, as her best and secret adviser, but when the matter was explained, it proved that the worthy rector brought no decision into the council, for he was as much embarrassed as any one.

"You must not ask me, my love, you must not ask me," he said; "I feel deeply for you, Louisa, I feel deeply for the unhappy woman herself, but—no, you must not ask me. It is a difficult case."

Louisa turned again to Morton, and he replied, in answer to her look, for she spoke not, "I am as much embarrassed as yourself, dear one. Were I to give way to the feelings of my heart, I should say 'Come at once, let our marriage take place without delay, and leave the rest to fate.' I do not know that one is called upon to sacrifice every feeling of the heart in such a case as this; but I will not enter into any casuistry, for I feel I am too much prejudiced by my own wishes."

"Well spoken, Lucius Junius Brutus!" said Mr. Quatterly. "I suppose I must say a word, though I told the good lady I would not. Remember, however, I don't speak as a lawyer; and, moreover, remember, I don't speak as a magistrate, but merely as a friend, and as your friend, fair lady, more than even his. In the first place, then, let me tell you, that it isn't for the sake of Mrs. Charlton I speak—no, not for that young scamp, her son—but for you, my dear. My own opinion is, that for you to go into the witness-box, in a public court of justice, to give evidence against one who has called you sister—to endure the badgering and insinuations of cross-examination by a clever counsel—and, after all, to think, throughout your life, that your testimony went far to doom this young man to death, would well nigh kill you; and if it did not at once, would injure your health for years."

"It would," replied Louisa; "of that I am well aware."

"Then the question is settled," said Morton; "I join my voice to his, and say, 'Let us go, Louisa.'"

"I will put it in another point of view," said Mr. Quatterly. "You are bound down in recognizances to appear and give evidence. The law itself has, therefore, fixed your responsibility at a certain sum of money; if you choose to sacrifice that, the law has nothing to say to

you. So much for the law of the question; and, in good faith and truth, I can't help thinking that you have no occasion to deal more hardly with yourself than the law does."

"With me there is but one question," said Morton, "what may be the effect of this upon your own health and happiness, Louisa. If they are both likely to suffer in a serious degree, I must hold that you are not bound to risk such a result. I trust I am unprejudiced in what I say—at least, I try to be so."

"You know, Edmond," replied Louisa—laying her hand upon his, and looking up in his face—"that I am not one to yield weakly; and if it be right to stay and give evidence, I will do it at any risk; but I will acknowledge that the very thought of standing in a court of justice, and saying those things which, however true, may deprive Alfred Latimer of life, terrifies me, and takes my courage from me. I believe that I should hardly quit the court alive; and I am quite sure that if anything I said were to produce the effect of his condemnation and execution, a gloom would come over my whole life which I could never shake off. The idea that I was right and just would, I fear, have very little power in consoling me; for we women, I believe, can seldom look at the simple question of justice as men do; and if there were any doubt also—if he persisted in denying his guilt to the last—I am very much afraid my own weakness would sometimes make me look upon myself as his murderer—Oh, it would be very horrible!—and yet, and yet, I fear that he is guilty!"

"I don't know," said Mr. Quatterly; "as the case stands at present he will be hanged to a certainty; but that does not at all prove that he is guilty, for there is a great deal of hanging honest men in England; and the palladium of English liberty, the trial by jury, is very much like tossing up a penny—heads win, tails lose. His defence is, I find, that he was out poaching on your manors, my lord—that he got his hands and his clothes stained with the blood of some bird or beast that he shot, and never was near the house. He says, I find, that he left the game he had procured, in a place called Gammer Mudge's Hole, somewhere in a wood near this place."

"A quantity of game was found there yesterday," said Dr. Western, "quite in the back part of the cave. The constable, who discovered it, says that it is nearly in a state of putrefaction, so that the story may be true. I pray God, that he may be able to prove it."

"He'll be hanged, notwithstanding, I should think," said Mr. Quatterly; "if the evidence remains as it is, and the very fact of this story having been put forward will have the effect which this dear young lady fears, and make her ever fancy that she has aided in condemning an innocent man."

Louisa pressed her hand upon her eyes, and her cheek turned deadly pale; but Morton seated himself beside her, and asked, in a low voice, "May I decide for you, Louisa?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Louisa Charlton; "do, Edmond, do. I shall be quite satisfied and confident that you are right, and whichever way I acted on my own judgment, I should always fear I had been wrong."

"Very well, then," said Morton, turning to

Dr. Western, "it only remains for Louisa to fix the day, sometime between this and the first of next month, when I think the assizes commence. Under all circumstances, dear Louisa, I think it will be wise to let the marriage be as private as possible, and, therefore, I shall not regret that all your establishment is not prepared for you, and that we shall go without new carriages and liveries, and wedding favors, and all the *et ceteras* of a smart bridal."

Louisa looked up, and smiled, but did not reply; and Dr. Western and Mr. Quatterly left the lover and her he loved alone together, while the worthy solicitor carried off the red box, containing the marriage-settlement, into the rector's library, and spread the parchment before him. They were soon after joined by Morton himself, with the news that Louisa had fixed that day week for the wedding; and Dr. Western smiled gravely, not at all doubting that love had not a little to do with the decision at which they had arrived on the difficult question submitted to them.

The dearly beloved reader can have no doubt that they were both exceedingly wrong; that Louisa ought, with unhesitating decision, to have gone into court, and given her evidence against Alfred Latimer, as if he had been a perfect stranger; that the love of public justice should have outweighed every private consideration; and that Themis should have triumphed over not only old associations, womanly weakness, a gentle heart, and a feeble frame, but even over Cupid and Hymen both together. She was very wrong, indeed, there can't be the least doubt of it; but still, I can but tell the story as it happened, and only begging to be remembered that I never set her up as a perfect character, and that I beseech all my lady loves, heroines, and others, not to follow the very bad example that she set them in the present instance.

CHAPTER XCIII.

THE inhabitants of Mallington were as happy as heart could wish; for I must now return to give a general glance over the state of the population in that little town, whose interests I have neglected so long. For years, for long years, perhaps never before in the history of the place, had such an inexhaustible fund of amusement and excitement been afforded to the Mallingtonians as the events of the last few months had supplied. Fortune had been prodigal to them and given them abundantly of all her most esteemed stores. In their humility and moderation, a simple highway robbery would have been considered by them, some six months before, as a great treat; but now they had had two people knocked down, a mansion broken into, a murder committed, and a young gentleman, bred up amongst them, lodged in prison, charged with a capital felony. These are what the French cook would call the *pieces résistance* of the feast; but there were numerous corner and side dishes, such as examinations before magistrates, coroners' inquests, constables galluping and searching, a wounded gentleman, a prospective marriage, and the discovery that Mr. Morton was neither more nor less than the new Earl of Mallington.

Besides all this, there were the various *hors d'œuvres* of the imagination. To judge from the satisfaction that was seen on every countenance, the bustle and activity displayed by the streets, and the eternal cackle that was going on at different doors, and at different counters, one might have supposed that the whole town, and every individual in it had won a prize in the lottery. There wanted nothing but a fire and a suicide to make their happiness complete.

The Misses Martin, the Crumps, the Dixons, and all the rest of the fraternity, were in a state of high glorification; but the unlearned reader may imagine that Miss Mathilda Martin would have a somewhat difficult card to play, considering how completely all her surmises and prognostications in regard to Mr. Morton had been falsified. A difficult card, indeed, it would have been to any unscientific person; but Mathilda—fair Mathilda!—was a complete mistress of the art and mystery of gossip; and she knew how and when to turn round, and take up the most opposite position to that which she had before assumed—to attribute the insinuations that had been proved false, and the assertions that had been contradicted, to the exact reverse of all the causes in which they had originated, and to vindicate her own claim to infallibility by skillfully proving that she knew the truth the whole time, though, for reasons of her own, she thought fit to conceal it. Oh, blessed and beautiful powers of imagination! what a resource are ye to numerous most industrious classes of society, especially to the rogue, the swindler, the scandal-monger, and the detected gossip! What shifts and turns will ye not supply!—what schemes and plots will ye not furnish!—what evasions and prevarications will ye not provide in a moment! Not even the poet, the romance writer, or the historian—all deeply indebted to you as they are—owe ye half so much as Miss Mathilda Martin! When Mr. Crump one day bought half-a-yard of coarse calico at the shop of the two spinsters, for the express purpose of maliciously condoling with Mathilda upon the discovery that Mr. Morton was the exact reverse of all that she had stated him to be, any ordinary mind would have been overthrown, any mere mortal cheek would have blushed—but not so Mathilda Martin—she laughed, she nodded, she winked to her sister; and then, with a sweet giggle, inquired of Mr. Crump, “And do you really think, my good sir, I didn’t know!”

“I really can’t tell, Miss Martin,” replied the gentleman; “all I can speak of is what you said.”

“To be sure I said it,” answered Miss Mathilda, with a look of compassion, and a toss of the head. “And I did more, Mr. Crump, I went up to Mr. Middleton, and let him know what every one said in the place, as well as myself. But I knew very well, all the time. And are you blind enough not to see why I did this?”

“I am, indeed!” answered Mr. Crump. In some amazement, for his powers were of a very inferior order to Miss Mathilda’s.

“Poor man! Well, I’ll tell you, then,” said the lady, “I knew quite well who he was before he had been here three days—oh, yes, I had

good information, I can tell you; and I saw quite well that he had come down here to see what we were like, and to spy us all out in disguise; and I determined that I’d force him to explain himself, and show who he really was. I’ve no notion of a gentleman—and a nobleman, too—coming down and pretending to be what he is not, just to take poor people in, so I determined he shouldn’t carry on that game long—I put down upon a piece of paper who he was a long time ago, and said to those I could trust—see if I am not right!”

Mr. Crump took his half yard of coarse calico, and retreated home, saying to his wife, when he arrived, “She pretends that she knew all about it, and only told all those lies to make him explain himself. But I don’t believe a word of it.” Neither did Mrs. Crump, nor any one else in the place.

Miss Mathilda, however, as soon as the worthy gentleman had evacuated the shop, turned to her sister with a laugh, saying, “I don’t choose those Crumps to get the better of me.”

Miss Martin quite agreed in her sister’s view of the case; but a new source of satisfaction was about to be opened before them, treading upon the heels of a slight disappointment. Before half an hour was over, some of the neighbors came in to inform them that Alfred Latimer would certainly get off, for that the story he had told was found to be quite true, and that the game he said he had been shooting, and which had blooded his clothes, had been discovered in Gammer Mudge’s Hole by Harry Soames, the constable.

This was a terrible shock to the feelings of the Miss Martins, not only because they had hoped with all their hearts to see Alfred Latimer hanged, but because they had predicted years before that his life would terminate by that process, and, consequently, if he escaped, another of their prognostications would fall to the ground. It made them seriously uneasy; it even suggested itself to the mind of Miss Mathilda that it might be as well to supply some little bits of evidence against him from her own copious manufactory. But that she did not dare to do eventually, though she was, as the reader knows, of a bold and adventurous character. She could not altogether, however, refrain from insinuations, and, for once in her life, she did not hit far from the mark. When Mrs. Dixon told her, because she was sure it would mortify her, that Mr. Latimer’s acquittal was quite certain now that the game had been found in the cave in Wenlock Wood, Miss Mathilda replied sharply “to the creature,” as she always called her, “Pooh, nonsense! of course he got some one to put it there for him.” These words of Miss Martin were taken up by Mrs. Dixon, and were repeated, far and wide, during that evening and the next day, throughout Mallington. They did not reach the ears, however, of Mr. Harry Soames till two days after, and as soon as he could, which was not till the next morning, he went into the shop of the Misses Martin in order to hear further particulars, for he looked upon it as some imputation upon his skill and penetration that any one should suppose such a thing possible without his having discovered it.

"So I hear, Miss Mathilda," he said, "that you declare Mr. Latimer has got some one to put the game that I found, in the cave since the murder. Now, I should like to know what evidence you have got upon the subject, for it doesn't do to say such things unless you can prove them, 'specially when a young man's life's at stake."

"Oh, I've got no evidence," said Miss Mathilda, sharply; "I only guessed it was so. It was so likely a thing, it might strike a baby."

"I don't think anything of the kind," answered Mr. Soames. "The game had been there a long time, I'll swear. There were five pheasants and two hares, all stinking; and one had got its head torn off, as if a fox had been at it."

"Just as easy to put stinking game there as fresh," said Miss Mathilda, dryly.

What the constable would have answered cannot be told, for just as he was about to reply, and that somewhat hotly, as it appeared, who should trip in but Mr. Gibbs, with his usually important air still more important than ever. He began by purchasing a number of yards of white muslin for neck-cloths, and while Miss Martin attended to his orders, and cut off, with the aid of her thumb, a quarter of a yard less than she charged him for, Mr. Gibbs turned round and greeted Harry Soames, whom he had not seen for ten days or a fortnight.

"Well, Mr. Gibbs, you have been to London, I suppose," said the worthy constable.

"Yes," answered the traveler; "I went up to account to my employers, and they made a great piece of work at my having remained in these parts so long, although they couldn't deny that I had sold more of the fragrant Balm of Trinidad than either of their three other travelers. They were very unjust, Mr. Soames, both to me and to that precious balsam, whose peculiar quality it is to nourish and revive the growth of the hair, to restore the natural curl, and impart—"

"Well, but how did it all end?" asked Mr. Soames, who had heard all about the Balm of Trinidad more than once before.

"Why, in my resigning, to be sure. What they said was tantamount to a vote of want of confidence, so I instantly tendered my resignation, which was accepted; and, having a slight inkling that something was to be done here, I set off from London immediately, and should have been here yesterday afternoon, had I not stopped at Sturton, to hear all about this new discovery there."

"What new discovery?" asked Mr. Soames. "Do you mean about the game?"

"Game! oh, dear, no," cried Gibbs. "I mean about the receiver of the stolen goods—the fence, as they call him. He's a Jew, and having been taken up on suspicion, has confessed it all. How Williams and Mr. Latimer came to him the night before, and made a bargain with him about the sale of the plate and things they were going to steal."

"There, I told you so!" cried Miss Mathilda Martin. "Why, the whole thing's as plain as the nose in a man's face."

"That depends upon the length of it, my dear madam," said Mr. Gibbs, whose own

proboscis was of no very extraordinary extent. "However, what I tell you is quite true. The man was taken up at St. Albans, it having been proved that he was down here at Sturton just at the time, and a great many odd things were found in his chaise. Seeing, I suppose, that he couldn't deny the facts, he thought, as Shakespeare says, Miss Martin, to make a merit of necessity, and told the whole."

"Lor! does Shakespeare say that, Mr. Gibbs?" cried Miss Martin. "I didn't know that; and so it's all up with Alfred Latimer. I said it would be so, a long time ago, for if there was a bad one, it is he."

"It's all up, indeed," said Gibbs; "this business of the receiver, Levi, has settled that quite, and so the story of the game is proved to be all fudge."

"No fudge about finding the game," muttered Harry Soames, turning to the door of the shop, and out he went, without waiting for the further comments of Miss Mathilda.

"Ah! poor man," said the lady, "he thought he could persuade me that Mr. Latimer was innocent. He's an innocent himself, I believe, to fancy such a thing. He who has known him so long, too."

"Pray, Mr. Gibbs, what do you want the muslin for?" asked the elder Miss Martin. "I only want to know how you would like them hemmed; if it's for neck-handkerchiefs, we can get them done for you."

"You must get them done very quick, Miss Martin," said the traveler, "for I shall want them soon. The truth is, I have just engaged myself in the service of the Earl of Mallington. I am first to act as his groom of the chambers, you know," he added, with a significant look; "we've been in a good many little affairs together; the apprehending those two ruffians, and the like; so each knows his man. I can depend upon him, and he can depend upon me."

"Very true, Mr. Gibbs," said Miss Mathilda; "that's a great advantage, Mr. Gibbs. I hope you won't forget us when you are established at the hall. We shall always be very happy to see you; and though we don't make as much show as some people, who have less substance, perhaps, than we have, yet our goods are of the best quality, and that you may depend upon. And when is my lord to be married, for that's the next thing, I suppose?"

"I really don't know," answered Mr. Gibbs; "as soon as possible, I believe."

Mr. Gibbs spoke the exact truth, for he did not know, Morton and Louisa having settled themselves that it would be better to keep the period of their intended union perfectly secret from all who were not necessarily acquainted with it. But the Misses Martin could never believe that anybody was perfectly candid with them, and they both, therefore, determined to worm the truth out of the worthy traveler, whether he liked it or not.

"Ah, poor things, they will have a long time to wait!" said the elder of the two ladies, "for Miss Charlton will have to give evidence on the trial; and then there will be the execution, you know; and then it won't be decent for her to marry at least for six months after her step-brother has been hanged. I shouldn't wonder if it did not take place at all, for my part. It

would not be pleasant, you know, Mr. Gibbs, to hear any one say to his wife, 'Your ladyship's brother, that was hanged!' would it now?"

"Not particularly, I should think," answered Gibbs; "but I don't suppose anybody would say so. It would be grossly indelicate, Miss Martin."

"Now I, for my part," rejoined Mathilda, "should not wonder if it took place immediately. I saw the beautiful new carriage that came down yesterday. It's mighty handsome, that's certain; but very plain, for an earl: no arms, no coronet, nor anything. But I dare say he wouldn't have been in such a hurry to have it down, if he weren't soon going to make use of it."

"And Miss Wilkinson's got a number of things to make, too," said Miss Martin; "and the hall is getting full of servants."

"Oh, he'll not be such a fool as to let the cord stand in the way of the heiress," replied Miss Mathilda, "and if he's a wise man, he'll get it over as soon as possible, and then cut the Latimers altogether. It will be very easy for her ladyship to say, 'the man was no relation of mine.'"

"And true, also," said Mr. Gibbs, "for he is no relation of her's. But as to the marriage, I think you are mistaken, for I found the earl and the young lady sitting quite quietly together, and looking anything but very merry."

"Oh, that's no sign," rejoined Miss Mathilda, "he always has a grave look; and though she was as gay, lighthearted a thing as one could see before her father took up with this Mrs. Latimer, she has never been so cheerful since that, I will say. See what comes of old men marrying intriguing widows!"

With this moral reflection terminated the more important part of the conversation between Mr. Gibbs and the Misses Martin, and we must now for a time leave the party in the shop, as it may be necessary to show what was the effect produced in other quarters by similar tidings to those which the worthy traveler brought over from Morton to Mallington.

CHAPTER XCIV.

It was just the governor's dinner hour—an hour at which, occupied in a function that had its peculiar delights for him, as well as for many other men, the worthy officer was not likely to disturb himself—when the swivel-eyed turnkey whom Jack Williams had commended to Alfred Latimer's notice, entered the young gentleman's room, and fixing upon him one of his eyes, closed the door quietly behind him, saying "I've got some news for you, sir;" then approaching alone to the table, he continued in a whisper, "That game story is no go, for they've caught Levi, the fence, and he's staggered. It's all out, how you and Jack saw him at the Bell, and made a deal with him about the stuff."

Alfred Latimer struck his hand against his forehead in a fit of rage and despair, but the turnkey took upon himself, on this occasion, an office which turnkeys are not very frequently found to perform. "Pooh, nonsense!" he

said, "don't take on so. The matter's not a bit the worse for that, I can tell you; if you had stood the trial, it would have gone hard with your neck, even if the fence had not peached. Why, the judge as is coming down is Sir John —, and he always sums up agen the prisoner. He keeps the black cap close beside him, and is sure to get it on one way or another afore he's done."

"If I had stood the trial!" exclaimed Alfred Latimer; "I don't understand what you mean. How could I help standing the trial?" and he looked in the man's face, apprehensive lest he had discovered the means employed by Williams and Brown to effect their escape from the jail. The turnkey's countenance, however, was very difficult to read, for the peculiar construction of the eyes, and the impossibility of knowing which of the two was looking at you, rendered the meaning always doubtful. If the one seemed to say one thing, the other said another, so that they neutralized each other.

"Oh, you knows very well what I means," rejoined the turnkey, winking his right eye; "it's all settled, and if you manages anything sharp, there'll be no more difficulty about it nor drinking a glass of small beer."

"Still I don't understand you," answered Alfred Latimer; "you must give me a hint of what is to be done, or I shall never know how to do it."

"What, hasn't your wife told ye?" asked the turnkey. "Didn't ye see her this arternoon?"

"No," answered Alfred Latimer, "she hasn't been here for these two days."

"Oh yes, she wer, this very night," rejoined the other; "but I know how it is. There's been a bit of a row about all the liberty granted here. One of the justices has been a-jawing of the governor, and so he's sent her away. I shouldn't wonder, now all this has come out, if they put Williams and Brown in irons again. I don't suppose our gentleman will do that with you, and if he do, we must get 'em off, that's all."

"But what is to be done—how is it to be effected?" demanded the prisoner.

"Stay a bit," said the jailer, and opening the door, he looked up and down the passage to ensure that there was nobody there who might remark his long conference with the young culprit. Having satisfied himself in this respect, he returned to the room again, and proceeded "Why, if you've heard nothing, I must tell you, for we can't get on without your knowing. You see one night last week, when I was off duty, and out at the Green Man a-drinking on a pot of beer, up comes to me a feller they calls Captain Tankerville, and he taps me on the shoulder, and says he wants a word with me. And so he had a word; and then he introduces me to a lady at the Bell, as is your mother—and a mighty cunning lady she is too, as ever I see."

The jailer meant this as a compliment, for shrewdness was in his estimation the highest quality of the female mind. Alfred Latimer received it as it was intended, and merely asked, "Well, well, what was done?"

"Why, we come to terms," replied the swivel-eyed turnkey; "and she bought me

down pretty tight, didn't she? But she was free enough of the cash, and that's the principal; so I promised you should see your way out some dark night, and you must keep yourself ready."

"Can't it be to-night?" demanded the prisoner, eager to ensure that no new circumstance might intervene to deprive him of this fresh-sprung hope.

"To-night! Lord 'a mercy, no!" replied the turnkey. "Why, there's nothing ready, and Dick's on night-duty. No, no—wait a bit; there's plenty of time. The day arter to-morrow the governor must go away to Huntingdon, and he'll be away all night. I know quite well that Mallet, who'll be left in charge, will take that minute to get drunk, for he hasn't been drunk this half-year, and he can't stand it much longer nor that. Dick, mayhap, will help him; at all events, he'll take more than usual; and if he is frightened to do it outright, we can contrive to hocus the last glass of his grog. Then we shall have all this ward to ourselves; and as the porter is in the job, you'll have nothing to do but to walk out. However, I'll tell you all about it another time. I must be off now, for fear the folks should think something."

Thus saying, he hurried away, and left him to his own meditations. Those meditations, however, were lighter and more joyful than they had been for many a day. He had new hope, looking all the brighter from the darkness out of which it sprang. Previously, although he thought his scheme was well laid, and gave him some chance of a favorable verdict, yet the uncertainty was so great, the probability of condemnation so terrible, that he had not ventured to indulge expectation; and in the plan of Williams and Brown he had placed but little confidence. Now, however, with assistance within the prison, and from the very officers who were bound by their duty to oppose him, his escape seemed certain; and he fancied that, with twelve or fourteen hours before him, and with the means of flight which he knew his mother would have prepared, he anticipated no difficulty in reaching the shores of Franco, where, at that time, a secure asylum could be obtained.

It may have been remarked by the reader that he made no inquiry of the turnkey as to whether his companions in guilt and misfortune were to benefit with himself in the means to procure his liberation; and the truth is, Alfred Latimer had no intention that they should. Even in the story which he had told, both to the governor of the jail, and to one of the turnkeys, in regard to the game which he said he had left in Wenlock Wood, he had shown no consideration for them, leaving their own share of the transactions of the night of the murder to be explained by them as they best could; and instead of declaring, as he had assured Williams he would, that they had all been out upon the same expedition together, had stated that he met the other two accidentally, and merely asked a passage in their boat. It was not, therefore, to be expected that, on the present occasion, he would pay any great attention to their safety. He determined, then, to keep the whole project which had just been revealed to him a profound secret from his two

companions; and when he saw them in the yard, to affect the greatest interest in their scheme for escape, as if he had no other hope but that. We all of us deceive ourselves continually, however, and the cunning and the wily more frequently than the others. We lay our plans, we scheme, we project, we advance in execution, and then comes fate, and throws some little insignificant obstacle in our way, by which all our devices are overthrown.

The next morning early, the governor of the prison came to visit him, with a grave, though civil expression of countenance. "I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Latimer," he said, "that I must make some change in your treatment. I am quite willing to show you any kindness or lenity in my power; but observations have been made, and sharp things said, so that I'm afraid that I must put you in irons, especially after what has come out before the magistrates."

"Good heaven, I hope not!" cried Alfred Latimer, turning very pale; notwithstanding the assurance of the turnkey, that he should soon be freed from those unpleasant appendages, the very idea was horrible to him. "There can be no necessity for such harshness, sir; I have done nothing since I have been here, surely, to make you alter your conduct."

"I can't say you have," replied the other; "and I should not think of doing it myself, but for these visiting justices. It is a great bore to have such a pack of meddling old women always at one's heels, finding fault with this thing one day, and with quite the reverse another. But I can't help myself, Mr. Latimer; and I must either do as I have said, or deny you the liberty of the yard, which would be worse."

"Oh, dear, no!" exclaimed the young man. "I would a great deal rather never go out again than have those irons on."

"Well, if you choose to stay in your room," said the governor; "it does not so much matter; but if you were to be seen out in a different way from the other two men charged with you there would be a great piece of work made."

Alfred Latimer repeated earnestly that he greatly preferred confinement to shackles; and after a few more words, the governor left him, little knowing that there was treason in the camp. During the next day, and the day that followed, the prisoner had but small intercourse with his friend the turnkey; though once or twice, when he brought something into the room, the man whispered words of consolation, such as, "It's all right!"—"Keep a good heart!"—"To-morrow night will do. Mind you be ready."

On the night of the same day, however—when Mrs. Charlton's son had lain down to rest, and, as near as he could guess, about two o'clock in the morning—he was aroused from sleep by hearing the door unlocked, and looking towards it, he perceived his squinting friend entering with a lantern in his hand. Approaching his bed-side, the man set down the light, and seated himself, saying "I'm on night-duty this evening, so I just came to tell you how all was settled. To-morrow there will be a chaise waiting for you at the end of the bridge, so, as soon as you are out, make for it direct, and then off wherever you like. It's

brought from a great distance, so no one will know anything of which way it goes."

"Ay, but how to get out of this place is the difficult matter," replied Alfred Latimer; "how is that to be done, if one of your comrades will be on duty?"

"Never you mind that," answered the man; "I'll manage Dick; only you be ready, and mind what I say. He'll go his round about twelve, and most likely take a look in. You had better be a bed, and asleep. Then, a little while after, you'll hear the door unlocked, and the bolts undrawn; but don't you take no notice, case of accidents. Wait five minutes, and then go down the passago into the yard—you know the way—and you'll find the door open. Then cross to t'other door, where you've often seen me a-standing, what I call watching in lambs at play. Go through that into t'other yard, and then straight through the lodge—it's just up the steps, you know, on the right hand; mind you don't make a mistake."

"No, no!" answered Alfred Latimer, "I know it quite well; that's the way I was brought in."

"Ay, you're the man that has got an eye for the country," answered the turnkey; "well, you'll find both the wicket and the gate open, and nobody there to say anything to you, so just walk out, and it's all done. Everything will be made snug as soon as you are gone, and they'll never find it out till breakfast time to-morrow."

"And what'll become of Williams and Brown?" asked Alfred Latimer, more to say something, than from any great interest in their fate.

"Why, they'll be hanged, you see," said the turnkey, with a laugh; "but they're mighty angry with you, I can tell you; for some of the fellers let them into what you said about meeting them accidentally in the park, after you had prigged the game; and I hear as how Jack Williams says, if you tell that story in court, he'll knock your brains out against the side of the dock; but you'll not need to say it in court, I've a notion," and the man laughed again. Alfred Latimer joined in his merriment; and, after repeating all his directions very distinctly, the turnkey left him.

Little sleep did the prisoner obtain that night, and the next day also passed in the uneasiness of expectation mingled with apprehension. Towards evening, however, various little signs of irregularity showed him that the governor was absent, as had been predicted he would be. The meals were brought half an hour behind the usual time; there was more noise and bustle than was common in the prison; and the turnkeys whistled as they walked along the passage. But time slipped away, one hour passed after another, and the clock of the neighboring church, which had so often told to the ear of the culprit that the few last moments of existence were waning fast, now marked for Alfred Latimer the approach of the period appointed for his liberation; and when at length it struck eleven, he threw down some clothes by the bedside to make it seem as if he had undressed, and then crept in between the sheets, just as he was, without even taking off his boots. Scarcely had he been half

an hour in bed when the sound of an irregular footfall, and of a voice, half humming, half singing one of the common slang songs of the day, was heard coming along the passage. In a minute or two after, the door was opened, and Dick, the turnkey, looked in, with his lantern in his hand; and, raising his head, Alfred Latimer could easily perceive that the good man had already taken more of some potent liquor than was quite consistent with the proper execution of his functions.

"Ah, you're a-bed, are you!" he said, with a hiccup, "you're generally one of the late 'uns, as all them are who have candles and such stuff allowed them. If I were governor, they should all be treated alike, every man of them, rich and poor, smasher and flasher, didler and devil."

"Ye prada, ye scamps, ye divers,
And all upon the lay,
In Touthill fields' blithe sheep-walks,
Like lambs that sport and play
O, rattling up your darbies,
Come hither at my call,
I'm jigger, dubber, here,
So you're welcome to Mill Dell.
Toi de roi de roi."

And, singing this very elegant composition, Dick, the turnkey, retired from the room, locked and bolted the door, and walked away.

Alfred Latimer lay and listened for every passing sound, but the hour of twelve struck, one and two followed, and no one approached his door. Apprehensions took possession of his mind, and all the phantasmagoria shapes of imagination passed before his eyes. Now he thought that his confederate had forgotten him—now, that some obstacle had occurred, and that the attempt must be postponed—now, that the whole had been discovered, and the plan frustrated—now that his mother and himself had been deceived, the money taken, and the act unperformed! Thus, till half-past two, he lay and tormented himself, glancing with a sinking heart towards the future, but seeing nothing before him but the just and terrible retribution of his crimes. At length there was a step, slow and deliberate, along the passage; he heard two other doors tried, and then the footfall came nearer. A key was placed in the lock with as little noise as possible, it was turned, the bolts withdrawn, and the step moved on again, the sound being soon lost as it retreated. For nearly five minutes he lay and listened, then rose, and, approaching the door, put his ear to the key-hole. All was silent, and, opening the door quietly, he looked out. There was a lantern, as usual, hung against the wall, half-way down the passage, but no other object met his eye, and after returning for a moment to take his hat, he stole silently out, proceeded to the door at the end of the corridor, which was unlocked, and then down six steps to another door, which led into the yard; it also was unlocked, but as he drew it back it creaked sharply upon the hinges, and Alfred Latimer paused for a moment or two, dreading that the sound might have called attention. As all remained silent, however, he ventured to go out, and walked on tiptoes across the yard. The night was very dark, the moon shone not, and no stars were to be seen, but he knew the way well, and hurrying on through the doorway, into the outer yard, advanced towards the gate.

The door was ajar, and a light was burning within, and, mounting the steps, the prisoner peeped in, gaining a clear view of the interior by the light of a long-unsnuffed candle, which stood upon the table. No person was to be seen, and, opening the door farther, he advanced somewhat hurriedly, fancying he heard a step behind him. The wicket was open, but the outer door was closed, and locked; the key, however, was in the inside, and, with a shaking hand, the young malefactor turned it, and was about to open the door. A bolt, below, which he had not observed, had to be drawn first, and he was stooping down to pull it back when he heard a clank and a step, and a strong hand grasped him by the neck.

Starting up, and shaking himself free, he turned round, and beheld his companion in crime, Williams, with a look of dark and bitter determination upon his face.

"You villain and you blackguard!" cried the man, again seizing him by the throat. "So you thought to sneak off in this way, did you!"

"Hush, hush!" cried Alfred Latimer; "if you would save your own life and mine, be silent, and come with me."

"What, with these on!" cried Williams, aloud, glancing at his irons. "No!" and he added a blasphemous oath—"and if I don't serve you, as you served Edmonds," and he made a great effort to dash him against the wall. Alfred Latimer, however, was strongly made, and Williams was encumbered by his fetters; but the struggle was now evidently to be for life or death, and grappling with him, and putting forth all his vigor and activity, the young culprit endeavored to thrust him beyond the wicket, and close it against him, while he made his escape by the door. With a grasp of iron, however, Williams clung to him, now dragging him forward, now thrusting him back; and thus in terrible but silent strife they reeled about upon the floor, sometimes hurling each other against the wall, sometimes against the porter's bed, till at length, as they dashed against the table in the midst of the room, it was overthrown. The light fell with it, and for a single instant after the struggle continued. Then both came down with a heavy fall together, but Alfred Latimer was undermost; the back of his head struck with a violent blow against the edge of the bed, and a long death-like groan followed. The next instant the light began to spread through the room, and a quick flame ran up the bed-curtain, against which the candle had fallen.

CHAPTER XCV.

THE hour appointed for Louisa Charlton's marriage was the earliest allowed by the canon. The licence had been obtained, the settlement signed, and all the arrangements made as quietly as possible. Dr. Western was to perform the ceremony, and Louisa's other guardian had come from town in order to give her away. Mrs. Charlton's written consent to the marriage had been obtained; and though she declined to be present at the ceremony, alleging her anxiety for her son as her excuse, she wrote a neat

flowery note to the Earl of Mallington, expressing her sense, as she termed it, of the liberality and consideration for her interests which he had shown in the matter of the settlements.

All was arranged and finally prepared before Morton left the rectory, at eleven on the day proceeding; and the whole party were about to retire to rest when one of the gamekeepers from Mallington Park came over to tell the worthy clergyman that poor Lucy, who had been very ill for the last three days, was not expected to get through the night, and asked eagerly to see him.

Dr. Western required no pressing, but set out on foot with the man, and was soon by Lucy's bedside. Fever was strong upon her, her cheek flushed, her eye bright and glistening, and her strength all gone, but she was perfectly sensible, and looked up with a faint smile when the good clergyman entered. He very soon found that the disease of the body still owed its cause to the mind, for it seemed that some one had foolishly told her of the revelations made by the Jew receiver, Levi, and that from that moment becoming convinced that all her worst suspicions had been well founded, and that her husband had been accessory to her father's death, she had given herself up to despair and self-reproach. The contention in her heart, between her love for her parent and her duty to her husband, had aided fatigue, grief, and apprehension, in overthrowing what little strength she had regained, and she had sunk rapidly from the hour the tidings reached her.

All the exertions of Mr. Netherdale had proved of no avail; and although Dr. Western entertained but little hope of any change for the better in her corporeal health, he sat down beside her, and tried, first by prayer, and then by argument, to tranquilize and bring comfort to her mind.

At first Lucy murmured more than once, "Oh! if my father's eye could have seen me aiding his murderer, and helping him to escape, what would he have thought of his poor child!"

"You are tormenting yourself, Lucy," replied Dr. Western, "with vain imaginations. The only eye that could and did see the whole was the eye of a holier and higher being; and he saw the motives, as well as the actions, and the heart likewise. You tell me, Lucy, that this young man assured you that he is innocent; God grant that it may still prove so. Do not let us judge him before even human law has pronounced upon his case; and until such is the result, you are perfectly justified in forgetting all, except that he is your husband. But first, my dear child, let us pray to him who sees all hearts, to strengthen and support you under every affliction, for your mind is weakened, and your faith diminished, or you would not suffer such terrors to prey upon your health, and even affect your life." And, kneeling down, the worthy clergyman did pray, with earnestness and devotion.

For three hours he remained with the sick girl, leaving no means untried to soothe her, and his efforts were not without success. She became more calm; she listened, and seemed convinced by his reasoning; she joined feebly in the prayers, and acknowledged that she felt happier and better. An inclination to sleep then

came on; and about three o'clock in the morning Dr. Western left her, and commenced his solitary walk home.

Though a man of an equable mind, and so much accustomed to contemplate the course of human life, with all the joys and sorrows which he was daily called upon to witness, under one point of view, namely, in reference to a future state, yet his heart was naturally too kind not to feel saddened by the sight of suffering and sorrow, and he walked on—melancholy, though not gloomy—along the little path which he could scarcely descrie through the thick darkness of the night. As he approached the gates, however, the air seemed to grow lighter, and he could see his way more distinctly. He did not look up till he reached the middle of the bridge, and then a red gleam, which above reflected from the water through the balustrades of the bridge, caused him to raise his eyes first to the sky, where the heavy clouds were glowing as if with the approach of dawn, and then along the valley through which the river flowed, where the cause of the glare soon became apparent. Up from beyond the gentle slopes of the hills, and the belts of wood which crossed the country to the west, rose large volumes of smoke, glowing with the bright blaze of a fierce fire below, and every now and then dotted with sparks of more intense light, as fragments of paper and linen, caught by the fire, were hurried up by the current into the air; and twice he thought he saw a column of flame rush up for a moment into the sky, as if some roof had fallen in, and given free vent to the blaze. He paused for several minutes to watch the conflagration, but, as far as he could calculate, the fire was at the distance of some seven or eight miles, and it was hopeless to think of rendering any assistance. Even as he gazed, indeed, the light became less vivid, and, judging that the flames had nearly exhausted themselves, the good rector turned his steps homeward, and retired to rest.

Though kept up so late, he rose at his usual hour on the following morning, and shortly after joined the party in the drawing-room to read prayers. Louisa, though evidently anxious and agitated, and dressed as plainly as usual, looked well and beautiful, as brides, indeed, in general do; but scarcely were the morning prayers over, and the whole party about to set out for the church, when Dr. Western was called out of the room, and then in turn summoned Mrs. Evelyn to council. His face was so unusually grave that Louisa marked it with some alarm; but whatever it was he communicated to his sister. She replied aloud, "Oh, no! on no account. There is no need for it, indeed, and I never like delays in such cases."

They then both returned to the drawing-room without mentioning at all the subject of their conference. But Louisa, who had formed her own judgment of what it was about, inquired somewhat anxiously, "Have you heard of poor Lucy this morning, my dear sir?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Western; "she is somewhat better, they say. I shall see her again by-and-by."

"Then, pray say all that is kind from me," rejoined Louisa. "I have left a little present

for her in my room. Tell her I think she will value it, because I have always worn it."

"Now, Miss Charlton!—now, Miss Charlton," said her father's old partner, pointing to the clock on the mantel-piece, "I know the earl is waiting, for I saw him pass with Mr. Quatterly ten minutes ago."

The hint was sufficient; and passing by the garden, through the churchyard, on foot, they entered the church. Only once Louisa Charlton looked to the right or to the left, and that was as she passed by her father's tomb. Mrs. Evelyn saw that her lips moved, and a drop gathered in her eye, and, touching her arm gently, she said, in a low tone, "You've chosen, my dear, as he would have chosen for you."

"I trust, I am sure it is so," answered Louisa; and in a few minutes more she stood before the altar with him she loved.

She was a good deal agitated, but yet her heart beat joyfully as words were spoken which realised the dream of young affection, swept far away all the doubts and apprehensions which had clung about the last few months, and made her the wife of one to whom all the tender feelings of her heart had long been given. Once during the ceremony she raised her look to his face, and their eyes met, but the expression of Morton's countenance was still that which she could have wished, and that which, perhaps, she expected. There was nothing of light and exuberant joy—nothing of careless merriment; it was deep, tender, happy, as if he felt the great import of every word he spoke, and promised to love, cherish, and protect, from the depth of the heart.

When the ceremony was over, the register signed, and everything complete, Louisa turned and bid adieu to Dr. Western and his sister, giving a tear that she could not repress, to the parting with those from whom she had known parental tenderness and affection; and then entering the plain chariot which stood at the church door, was soon rolling away from Mallington with her husband. She owed to herself—she did not conceal from him, that she was happy; and the clouds that had preceded, and the storm that had fallen so heavily at last, only made the sunshine that followed, all seem more bright and sparkling.

More than a fortnight elapsed before the Earl and Countess of Mallington—then stopping for a day or two beside the Lake of Geneva—heard of the events which had taken place at Sturton. Even then there was little in the tidings they received to cast any deep shade upon their young happiness. The county jail, they were informed, in a letter from Dr. Western, had been burned nearly to the ground, on the night preceding the wedding-day. What had become of Mr. Latimer no one knew, the worthy doctor said. Many of the prisoners had made their escape—some had perished in the flames, as well as one of the turnkeys, who was supposed to have been drunk at the time. It was generally imagined, however—the letter went on to say—that Mr. Latimer had contrived to fly, for the wing of the building in which he had been confined was the only part left standing; and the room which he inhabited had been found tenantless, and with the door open, though no one could tell whether it had been unlocked by

one of the jailers or not. The man Williams had also escaped, it appeared; but that, Dr. Western said, was easily accounted for, as the wall of his cell, when examined, proved to be pierced completely through, leaving an aperture communicating with the yard.

There were one or two circumstances connected with the burning of the jail which Dr. Western did not think fit to detail, in the absence of all positive certainty, with regard to several points of importance. In the lodge of the jail, where the fire was supposed to have originated, a body was found, so disfigured with the flames that it was impossible to identify it. The back part of the skull, however, was found to have been fractured; and a celebrated surgeon of the place, upon examination, pronounced that the injury must have been received before death. The worthy rector of Mallington himself visited the spot, and viewed the body; and, though he would not venture to speak positively, yet, from the appearance of one hand, which the fire had not touched, he entertained little doubt that Alfred Latimer had there ended his career of folly and crime.

The man Brown was brought to trial some ten days after the destruction of the jail, convicted of robbery and murder, and executed, as he well deserved; but before death, as was then more common with criminals than now, he made a full confession of his crime, telling all that had occurred when he and his companions made their way into Mallington Hall. He protested to the last that neither he nor Williams had any share in the murder of Edmonds, the park-keeper, but laid the guilt of that terrible act justly upon him who had really committed it.

Dr. Western did all that was possible to prevent these statements from reaching the ears of poor Lucy, but his precaution proved vain; and though she rallied a little, and even sat up for several days, yet six weeks had not passed ere the poor girl lay by the side of her father in the churchyard at Mallington.

What became of Alfred Latimer's companion, Williams, was never correctly ascertained; and the people of the place believe he is still living, and fancy that he appears in the neighborhood from time to time, seeking an opportunity of committing fresh depredations. However that may be, certain it is, that about a year after, in dragging for the body of a lad who had been drowned, the people of Sturton pulled up from

the bottom of the stream, just below the bridge, the corpse of a man in a state of complete decomposition. The height was exactly that of the notorious Jack Williams; the depth of chest and breadth of shoulders so remarkable in that malefactor were the same; and the fetters by which the limbs were still encumbered, showed that at all events he was one of the prisoners escaped from the jail. Every person who took advantage of the confusion occasioned by the fire to fly was recaptured soon after, or convicted subsequently for fresh offences, with the exception of Williams and Alfred Latimer, so that in the end little, if any, doubt remained as to the body which had been found in the river.

The rest of the personages mentioned in this history went on in the course to which their several characters prompted them. The Misses Martin gossiped and slandered to the end; Mallington remained nearly the same as ever, till a few years ago, when a railroad was carried past it, and all was changed. Mrs. Windsor fondly flattered herself that she should be the house-keeper at Mallington Hall on the return of the earl and countess from the continent; but she was disappointed in this expectation, receiving, however, as a consolation, a very comfortable annuity for her services to Miss Charlton.

The only person who remains to be mentioned is the mother of Alfred Latimer, and her fate is soon told; she sat down with great resignation under her misfortunes, reposing upon her selfishness, which is a very comfortable pillow for those who have nothing else to rest upon. With an income of two thousand a year, however, her selfishness was very well provided for, and it was said she took other means of consoling herself also—the consumption of wine in her household being considerable. At all events, her sorrow was of the kind that grows fat, and before her death she had extended to an enormous size, and had also become a little coarse in skin and complexion. Dr. Western and Mrs. Evelyn sleep in Mallington Churchyard. And of the earl and countess, what shall I say? I saw them lately, dear reader, and they seemed, as far as mortal eye could see, to be very happy—happy in the means, the opportunity, and the love of beneficence—happy in the respect of those whose respect they value—happy in honor and in virtue, and in calm and placid tempers—happy in themselves, in their offspring, and unchanging affection.



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OR,

TIMES OF OLD.

A ROMANCE.

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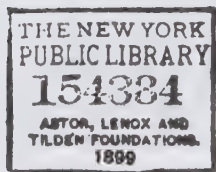
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ARRAH NEIL.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT two centuries ago, in times with which we are all familiar, as they comprised a period of English history the events of which have affected the social condition of the British people more than almost any which have preceded or followed that period—about two centuries ago, there stood upon the slope of a gentle hill, in a picturesque part of England, an old brick mansion of considerable extent, and of a venerable though flourishing exterior. On the right hand and on the left there was a wood of various trees, amid which Evelyn might have delighted to roam—choice children of the British forest, mingled with many a stranger grown familiar with the land, though not long denized in it. In front was a terrace flanked with quaintly carved flower-pots of stone, and beyond that stretched a lawn several roods in extent, leaving the mansion fully exposed to the eye of every one who wandered through the valley below. Beyond the lawn, again, a wide view extended over a pleasant scene of hill and dale, with the top of a village church and its high tower peeping over the edge of the first earth wave; and far off, faint and gray, were seen the lines of a distant city apparently of considerable extent. The house itself had nothing very remarkable in its appearance, and yet circumstances compel us to give some account of it, although it is but building up to pull down, as the reader will soon perceive. The middle part consisted of a large square mass of brickwork rising somewhat higher and projecting somewhat farther than the rest of the building. It had in the centre a large hall door with a flight of stone steps, and on each side of the entrance were three windows in chiselled frames of stone. On either side of this centre was a wing flanked with a small square tower, and in each wing and each tower was a small door opening upon the terrace. Manifold lattices, too, with narrow panes set in lead, ornamented these inferior parts of the building in long, straight rows, and chimneys nearly as numerous towered up from the tall, peaked roofs, not quite in keeping with the trim regularity of the other parts of the edifice. The whole, however, had a pleasant and yet imposing effect when seen from a distance, and to any one who looked near, there was an air of comfort and cheerfulness about the mansion which well compensated for the want of grace. The view, too, from the terrace and the windows was in itself a continual source of calm and high-toned pleasure to the minds that dwelt within, for over the wide scene came a thousand varying aspects as the clouds and sunshine chased each other along like the poetical dreams of a boy's mind and varying imagination. Morning and twilight, noon, and moonlight and midday,

each wrought a change in the prospect, and brought out something new and fair on which the eye rested with delight.

It was evening: the lower limb of the large round sun rested on a dark line of trees which filled up one of the slopes of the ground about six miles off; and above the bright and glowing disk, which seemed to float in a sea of its own glory, were stretched a few small dark clouds edged with gold, which hung above the descending star like a veil thrown back to afford one last look of the bright orb of day before the reign of night began. Over head, the sky was blushing like a bride, and woods and fields, and distant apices and hills, all seemed penetrated with the purple splendour of the hour. Nothing could be fairer or more peaceful than the whole scene, and it was scarcely possible to suppose that the violent passions of man could remain untamed and unchastened by the aspect of so much bright tranquility.

Winding along at the foot of the hill, and marking the commencement of what might be called the plain—though, to say the truth, the wide space to which we must give that name was broken by innumerable undulations—appeared a hard but sandy road, from which a carriage-way led by a circuit up to the mansion. In some places, high banks covered with shrubs and bushes overhung the course of the road, though in others it passed unsheltered over the soft, short grass of the hill; but just at the angle where the two paths separated, the ground rose almost to a cliff, and at the bottom was a spring of very clear water gathered into a little stone basin.

By the side of the fountain, at the time we speak of, sat a figure which harmonized well with the landscape. It was that of a young girl not yet apparently sixteen years of age. Her garb was that of poverty, her head uncovered by any thing but rich and waving locks of warm brown hair, her face and neck tanned with the sun, her feet bare as well as her hands and her arms above the elbows, and her apparel scanty, coarse and old, though scrupulously clean. She seemed, in short, a beggar, and many a one would have passed her by as such without notice; but those who looked nearer saw that her features were very beautiful, her teeth of a dazzling whiteness, her limbs rounded and well formed, and her blue eyes under their long jetty eyelashes as bright yet soft as ever beamed on mortal man. Yet there was something wanting, an indefinable something, not exactly intellect, for there was often much keen and flashing light spread over the whole countenance. Neither was it expression, for of that there was a great deal; neither was it steadiness, for there frequently came a look of deep thought, painfully deep, intense, abstracted, unsatisfied, as if the mind sought something with

in itself that it could not discover. What it was it is difficult, nay, impossible to say. Yet there was something wanting, and all those who looked upon her felt that it was so.

She sat by that little fountain for a long time, sometimes gazing into the water as if her heart was at the bottom of the brook; sometimes, suddenly looking up, and with her head bent on one side, and her ear inclined, listening to the notes of a lark that rose high in the air from the neighbouring fields, and trilled the joy-inspired hymn under the glowing sky; and as she did so, a smile, sweet, and bland, and happy, came upon her lip, as if to her the song of the lark spoke hope and comfort from a higher source than any of the earth.

While she was thus sitting more than one horseman passed along the road, but the poor girl gave them only a casual glance, and then resumed her meditations. One or two villagers, too, on foot, walked on their way, some of them giving her a nod, to which she answered nothing. A thin and gloomy-looking personage, too, with a tall hat and black coat and doublet, rode down from the mansion, followed by two men of somewhat less staid and abstinent appearance, and, as he passed by, he gave her a sour look, and muttered something about the stocks. The girl paid him no attention, however, and he was likewise soon out of sight.

At length a horse trotting briskly was heard coming along the high road, and a moment after a gay cavalier, well mounted and armed, with feather in his hat and gold upon his doublet, long, curling locks hanging on his shoulders, and heavy gilt spurs buckled over his boots, appeared at the angle of the bank. There he pulled up, however, as if doubtful which path to take; and seeing the girl, he exclaimed, in a loud but not unkindly tone, "Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, sweetheart?"

The girl rose and dropped him a not ungraceful courtesy, but for her only reply she laughed.

"Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, pretty maid?" the stranger repeated, bringing his horse closer to her.

"The village is out there," replied the girl, pointing with her hand along the road; "the house is up there," she added, turning towards the mansion on the hill; and then she immediately seated herself again with a deep sigh, and began once more to gaze into the fountain.

The stranger wheeled his horse as if to ride up to the house, but then paused, and springing to the ground, he turned to the girl once more, asking, "What is the matter with you, my poor girl! Has any one injured you? Is there any thing ails you? What makes you so sad?"

She looked in his face for a moment with a countenance totally void of expression, and then gazing down into the water again, she resumed her meditations without making any reply.

"She must be a fool," the stranger said, speaking to himself. "All the better for her, poor girl; I wish I were a fool too, one would escape half the sorrows of this life if we did not understand them, and half the sins too, if we did not know what we were about. What a happy thing it must be to be a rich fool! but she is a poor one, that is clear, and the case is not so fortunate. Here, sweetheart, there's a

crown for thee. Good faith, I'm likely, ere long, to thank any man for one myself, so it matters not how soon the few I have are gone."

The girl took the money readily, and dropped the giver a low courtesy, saying, "Thank your worship—God bless you, sir."

"He had need, my pretty maid," replied the stranger, "for never man wanted a blessing more than I do, or has been longer without one;" and thus speaking, he sprang upon his horse's back again, and rode up towards the house.

When he was gone, she to whom he had spoken continued standing where he had left her, meditating sadly, as it seemed, for several minutes; and at length she said, in a low tone, "Alas! he does not come—he does not come. Perhaps he will never come again—oh, how I wish he would stay away!"

The whole speech was as contradictory as a speech could be, especially when the look and manner were taken as part and parcel thereof. But there was nothing extraordinary in the fact; for man is a mass of contradictions, and there is scarce one enjoyment that does not partake of pain—one apprehension that is not mingled with a hope—one hope that is not checkered by a fear. Antagonist principles are ever warring within us, and many of the greatest contests result in a drawn battle. If, however, the girl's first words and the last had been evidently in opposition to each other, the wish with which she concluded was instantly belied by the glow upon her cheek and the light in her eye when she once more heard the sound of a horse's feet coming from the direction of Bishop's Merton.

"It is he!" she cried, with a smile, "it is he! I know the pace, I know the pace!" and, running into the middle of the road, she gazed down it, while a horseman, followed by three servants, came on at a rapid rate, with a loose rein and an easy seat. He was a young man of seven or eight-and-twenty, with long, fair hair, and pointed beard, tall and well made, though somewhat slight in form, with a grave and even stern cast of features, but a broad, high forehead, clear but well marked brow, and lips full but not large, fixed, and apparently unsusceptible of any but a cold, thoughtful expression as he rode forward, till suddenly his eyes lighted on the poor girl who was watching him, when a bright and beaming smile broke over his whole countenance, and a complete change took place, like that which spreads over a fine country when the storm gives place to sunshine.

"Ah, Arrah Neil!" he cried, "my poor Arrah Neil, is that you come back! Where is your grandfather, poor child—have they set him free?" And he, too, sprang from his horse, taking the girl's hand with a look of tender compassion.

"No, he is not free," replied Arrah Neil; "he never will be free."

"Oh yes," answered the gentleman, "these things cannot last for ever, Arrah. Time will bring about changes, I doubt not, which will deliver him from whatever prison they have taken him to."

"Not from that prison," answered the girl with tears rising in her eyes; "it is a low and

narrow prison, Lord Walton. I told them he would die when they took him, and he only reached Devizes. But they are happy who sleep—they are happy who sleep;” and, sitting down by the side of the well, she fell into thought again.

The stranger stood and gazed at her for a moment without uttering a word. There are times when silence is more eloquent of sympathy than the choicest words of condolence. One of the servants, however, who had ridden up, and was holding his lord's horse, burst forth with an oath: “The Roundhead rascals! I wish I had my sword in their stomachs! The good old man was worth a score of them.”

“Hush!” said his master, sternly, “hush! no such words in my hearing, Langan!”

“Then faith, my lord, I must speak them behind your back,” murmured the man; but his master had taken a step forward, and was bending down his head to speak to the poor girl. “Come up to the house, Arrah,” he said; “you must not stay here alone, nor go back to the cottage either. Come up to the house, and my sister will comfort and be kind to you.”

The girl gazed in his face for a moment, and then suddenly starting up, as if some remembrance flashed across her mind, she exclaimed, “No, no! do not go there, sir! Do not go there! Misfortune will happen to you if you go there: I am sure it will—I am quite sure it will.”

“But why, Arrah!” asked her companion, with an incredulous smile; “what makes you think that there is any danger? Have you seen any of the Parliament people there?”

“There was Dry, of Longoaken,” replied Arrah Neil, “but he came down again; and it is not that. But I must not say what it is; yet do not go up, do not go up! kind, good Charles Walton, do not go up!”

The young nobleman looked at her with an expression of much commiseration for her sorrows, but no reliance on her words. “I must go, Arrah,” he said; “you know my sister is there; and even if there be danger, I must go. Come up, Arrah, there's a good girl, and we will do the best we can for you in these sad times.”

The poor girl shook her head sadly, and after a moment's pause, replied, “Ah, you think me a fool, and so I am, perhaps, for things trouble me much here,” and she laid her finger on her brow; “memories—memories that haunt me, but are like dreams that we try to recall distinctly after sleep is gone, and yet have but faint images of them, as of trees in a mist. But I am not a fool in this, sir; and I beseech you not to go.”

“Stay with her, Langan,” said Lord Walton, “and bring her up to the house. The fit is upon the poor girl, and her grandfather's death may make it worse. You loved him well, and will be kind to her. Stay with her, good fellow, and persuade her to come up. I must go, now, Arrah,” he continued; “but come up with Langan, for Annie will be glad to see you again, and will try to comfort you.” Thus saying, he remounted his horse, and rode onward up the hill.

CHAPTER II.

On the evening of the same day whereof we have just been speaking, and in the neighbouring village or town of Bishop's Merton—for it was beginning to give itself the airs of a great place—sat two personages finishing their supper about half past nine o'clock. Their food was a cold sirloin of roast beef, for the English nation were always fond of that plain and substantial commodity, and their drink was good English ale, the most harmonious accompaniment to the meat. The elder of the two was a hard-featured, somewhat morose-looking personage, but of a hale, fresh complexion, with a quick gray eye. There was a great deal of thought about the brow; and round the mouth were some strong defined lines, we might almost call them furrows. He was as thin and spare, too, as a pair of tongs, but apparently strong and active for his age, and his long limbs and breadth of chest spoke considerable original powers. He was dressed altogether in black, and though a tall, steeple-crowned hat lay on a chair by his side, he wore, while sitting at meat, a small round cap of black cloth, in the shape of half a pumpkin, on the top of his head. He had also a good strong sword leaning on the chair beside him, habited like himself in black, with steel points and hilt.

The other was a younger man, very different in appearance; a good deal taller than his companion, and apparently more vigorous; his face decorated with an immense pair of mustaches, and a somewhat long-pointed beard, both of that indistinct hue which may be called whey colour. His hair floated upon his shoulders in the style of the Cavaliers; but, to say the truth, it seemed somewhat unconscious of the comb; and his dress, too, displayed that sort of dirty finery, which by no means prepossesses the wary user or experienced tradesman with the idea of great funds at command on the part of the wearer. His doublet of soiled leather displayed a great number of ornamented buttons and shreds of gold lace; his collar and hand-ruffles were of lace, which had once been of high price, but had seen service probably with more masters than one, and had borne away in the conflict with the world many a hole and tear, more honourable in flag or standard than in human apparel. Hanging to his side, and ready for action, was an egregious rapier, with a small dagger placed beside it, as if to set off its length to the greater advantage. On his legs were a large pair of jackboots, which he seldom laid aside, and there is even reason to suppose that they covered several deficiencies; and hanging on a peg behind was a broad beaver, very unlike the hats usually worn in England at the time, ornamented with a long red feather.

As to his countenance and its expression, they were very peculiar. The features in themselves were not bad; the eyes large and somewhat prominent. The nose, which was by no means pre-eminent, though turned up at the point, was not altogether ill-shaped, and might have passed muster among the ordinary noses of the world, had it not been that, though tolerably white itself, it was set in the midst of a patch of red, which seemed to have transferred itself from the cheeks to unite in the centre of

the face. The expression was bold, swaggering, and impudent, but a touch of shrewd cunning was there, diversified every now and then by a quick, furtive look around, which seemed to show that the worthy gentleman himself, like a careful sentinel, was always upon the watch.

Certainly, seldom were there ever seen companions more opposite than on the present occasion; and yet it not infrequently happens, in this strange life of ours, that circumstances, inclination, or wayward fortune, make our comrade of the way, the man, of all others, least like ourself; and of all the great general principles which are subject to exceptions, that which has the most is the fact of birds of a feather flying together.

"I have done," said the elder of the two, laying down his knife.

"Push! nonsense," cried the other; "you haven't eaten half a pound. I shan't have done this half hour. I am like a camel, Master Randal. Whenever I have an opportunity, I lay in a store for the journey in my own stomach."

"Or like an a-a," replied the other gentleman, "who takes more upon his back than he can carry."

"No, not like an ass, either," replied the man with the great mustaches, "for an ass bears the food for other people—I for myself. How can you or I tell that we shall get another meal for the next three days? 'Tis always right to prepare for the worst; and therefore, so long as my stomach will hold and the beef endure, I will go on."

"The man who never knows when he has enough," answered his companion, "is sure sooner or later either to want or have too much, and one is as bad as the other."

"Oh, your pardon, your pardon," cried the tall man; "give me the too much! I will always find means to dispose of it—I am of the too much faction. It's my battle cry, my rallying word. Give me the too-much by all means! Did you ever see a carpenter cut out a door? Did you ever see a tailor cut out a coat? Did you ever see a blacksmith forge a horse-shoe? They always take too much to begin with. There are plenty of bags in the world always wide open for superfluities; but, to say truth, I never found I had too much yet: that's an epoch in my history which is to come."

"Because, like other fools, you never know when you have enough," replied the man called Randal; "and as for your future history, it will form but a short tale, easily told."

"I know what you would say, I know what you would say," replied the other; "that the last act will find me in the most elevated situation I have ever filled, though I may still be a dependent. But I can tell you, my good friend, that in my many dangerous expeditions and important occupations, I have escaped the cross piece of timber and the line perpendicular so often, that I fear I am reserved for another fate, and am in great dread every time I go upon the water."

"You are quite safe," replied the other, with a grim smile: "I'll wager a thousand pounds upon your life, in a worm-eaten boat, with a hole in the bottom. But hump, hump—I would have you beware of hump! Odds life, to hear

you talk of your dangerous expeditions and important occupations—Cease, cease! I would sleep in peace to-night, and you will give me an indigestion."

"Pshaw!" cried the other; "you have no more stomach than a pipped hen; and as to my exploits, what land have I not visited—what scenes have I not seen! To whom, if not to me, was owing the defence of Rochelle! To whom—"

"Hush, hush!" said his companion; "tell the tale to others. I would as soon drink vinegar, or eat stale cabbage, as hear lies four times repeated—even with a variation."

"Lies!" cried the other; "thunder and lightning, sir—"

"There, there!" cried his companion, quietly waving his hand: "that will do! no more of it! Thunder and lightning will do nothing at your bidding; so the less you have to do with them the better, lest you burn your fingers. Try to be an honest man! leave off lying! don't swagger but when you are drunk! and perchance you may be permitted to hold the horses while other men fight."

"Well, there is no use in quarrelling with a maggot," replied his tall comrade; and, taking to his knife again, he commenced a new incision on the beef, in assailing which, at least, he kept his word with a laudable degree of fidelity.

In the mean while, the gentleman in black turned his shoulder to the table, and fell into deep thought. But after a moment or two he opened his lips, with an oracular shake of the head, not exactly addressing his speech to his companion, but more apparently to the bill of his own sword, the point of which he had brought round between his feet, and the blade of which he twirled round and round with his hands while he was speaking.

"Nine out of ten of them," he said, "are either rank fools or cold-hearted knaves, presumptuous blockheads, who think they have a right to command, because they have not wit enough to obey; or cunning scoundrels, who aim alone at their own interests when they are affecting to serve only their country, and yet are fools enough not to see that the good of the whole is the good of every part."

"Who—who—who? Who do you mean?" asked the other.

"English gentlemen," replied the man in black, "English gentlemen, I say."

"Complimentary, certainly," remarked his comrade; "and by no means too general or comprehensive. I dare say it's very true, though; so here's to your health, Master Randal."

"Let my health alone," said Randal, "and take care of your own; for if you drink much more of that old ale, your head, to-morrow morning, will be as heavy as the barrel from which it comes, and I shall have to pump upon you, to make you fit for any business whatsoever. Come, finish your supper, and take a walk with me upon the hill. But who have we here! One of the rebels, I take it. Now, mind your part, but do not lie more than your nature absolutely requires."

The last words of this speech were as may be supposed, spoken in a low voice, as an addition was made to the party in the room where they were sitting.

The personage who entered was the same thin, self-denying-looking gentleman who had passed poor Arrah Neil, as she sat by the fountain in the morning, and had, in his own mind, charitably furnished her with a lodging in the stocks. That we may not have to refer to this gentleman's previous history hereafter, we may as well pause here for a moment to say the few words that are needed on the subject, especially some reference may be made to his former life in another place. Master Dry, of Longsoaken, as he was now called, had risen from an humble origin, and though now a wealthy man, had commenced his career as the errand-boy of a grocer, or rather general dealer, in the village of Bishop's Merton. His master was a rigid man, a Puritan of the most severe cast, and his master's wife a buxome dame, given somewhat to the good things of life, especially of a fluid kind, which she employed the ingenuity of young Ezekiel Dry in obtaining for her, unknown to her more abstemious better half. He thus acquired some small skill in deceiving sharp eyes, and it was whispered that his worthy patron did not fail to give him farther improvement in this peculiar branch of science, by initiating him into the mystery of the difference between a yard measure and a yard of tape or riband; between a pound weight and a pound of sugar or butter; between which, as the learned reader is well aware, there is a great and important distinction. As worthy Ezekiel Dry grew up into a young man, his master settled down into an old one; and at length, Death, who, like his neighbours in a country town, is compelled occasionally to go to the chandler's shop, called one morning at the door of Ezekiel's master, and would not be satisfied without his full measure. The usual course of events then took place: there was a widow and a shopman; the widow was middle-aged and wealthy, the shopman young and poor, and Mr Dry became a married man, and master of the shop. During a probation of twenty years, which his matrimony lasted, he did not altogether escape scandal; but in those times, as in others, very rigid piety (at least in appearance) was not always accompanied by very rigid morality; and those people who conceived that they might exist separately, looked upon the latter as of very little consequence where the former was pre-eminent. At length, after having resisted time and strong waters (which her second husband never denied her in any quantity) to the age of nearly seventy, Mrs. Dry slept with her ancestors, and Mr. Dry went on flourishing, till at length he sold his house and shop to another pillar of the conventicle, and bought a good estate in the near neighbourhood, called Longsoaken. He still kept up his connexion with his native town, however, became a person of the highest consideration therein, took part in all its councils, managed many of its affairs, was acquainted with all its news, and was the stay of the Puritans, the terror of the parson, and the scorn of the Cavaliers.

It was his usual custom, as he still remained a widower, to look into the "Rose of Sharon" every fine afternoon, less, as he said, to take even the needful refreshment of the body, than to pause and meditate for half an

hour before he retired to his own house; but it was remarked that, on these occasions, he invariably had a small measure of some kind of liquid put down beside him, and consulted the host upon the affairs of everybody in the place. In the present instance, Mr. Dry had received immediate information that two strangers had appeared at the Rose of Sharon between eight and nine, and he had hastened up from Longsoaken without loss of time; but he had spent nearly half an hour with the landlord in an inner chamber, inquiring into all the particulars of their appearance and demeanour. Now the landlord had lost more than one good customer in consequence of the unpleasant interference of his respected neighbour, who had occasionally caused some of the most expensive visitors at his house to be committed as malignants; but as he dared not show any resistance, or make any remonstrance to a person so high in authority as Master Dry, of Longsoaken, his only course was to defend the characters of his guests as far as was safe. But the worthy host was a timid man, and did not even venture to pronounce a decided opinion in the presence of his betters.

In answer, therefore, to the questions now addressed to him, he replied, "Oh dear no, worshipful sir! That is to say—for one cannot be certain of any thing in this ungodly world—they do not look like it at all. Malignants are always gay in their apparel, and the gentleman is dressed just like yourself, all in black. He has got a Geneva scull-cap, too. I should not wonder if he were a gifted man like yourself."

"That may be a mere disguise," said Mr. Dry.

"Then, malignants are always roystering blades," continued the landlord; "calling for all manner of things, beginning with wine, and ending with strong waters. Now these good people have had naught but beef and ale—though, doubtless, as all godly men may do for the comfort of the inner man, they will take something more warming before they go—but as yet, one tankard of ale is all they have had."

"That looks well," said Mr. Dry, oracularly; "not that I would condemn any man for using creature comforts in moderation, according to his necessity. Some men's complexion, if of a cold and melancholic nature, does require such helps. I myself am driven to it: but what more, my friend! Are they grave in their discourse?"

"As heart could wish," replied the landlord. "I should take them rather for the most pious and humble."

"I will see them myself," said Dry, who began to suspect the landlord. "It is not easy to deceive my eyes."

But the worthy host contrived to detain his worshipful fellow-townsmen for some minutes longer, in order that the guests might finish their meal in peace, by opening a conversation in regard to the return of "the poor silly girl, Arrah Neil," as he called her, in regard to whom he had shrewd suspicions that Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, entertained sentiments not quite so rigid as those which his words in the morning might seem to imply.

On this part of their conversation, however, I shall not dwell, as it would be neither very

instructive nor very amusing, but will return once more to the parlour of the inn, which Mr Dry, of Longsoaken, entered with a staid and stately step, with his two eyes bent upon the ground as if he were in deep meditation. The younger of the two guests in the parlour lolled in his chair and bit his lip; the elder considered Mr. Dry attentively, but suffered him to enter the room and approach the table without saying a word. Neither did he make any movement of limb or feature, but remained cold, stiff, and dry, as if his limbs and his countenance were made of wood. Mr. Dry, however, always recollected that he was a man in authority; and great success in life, where there is any weakness of character, is sure to produce a confident self-importance very comfortable to the possessor thereof, though not particularly agreeable to his friends and companions.

As neither of the others uttered a word, then, he began the conversation himself without farther ado.

"I trust we are brethren, sir," he said, addressing the gentleman whom we have called Randal.

"I trust we are so," replied the other.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Dry; "my name is Dry, sir—Dry, of Longsoaken."

"You may be soaked long enough," murmured the man at the table to himself, not loud enough to be heard; "you may be soaked long enough before you be moistened, Mr. Dry."

But his companion, who saw his lips move, gave him a grave look, and replied to the intruder, "I am happy to hear it, sir. It is a godly name, which I have heard of before. Will you never have done with that beef, Master Barecolt?"

"But this mouthful, but this mouthful," replied the gentleman at the table, "and then I am with you."

"One word before you go," said Mr. Dry; "you seem, sir, a godly and well-disposed man, and I doubt not have been led into the right way; but there is an air of prelatial malignancy about this person at the table."

"You are altogether mistaken, worthy Dry," said the good gentleman who had been paying such devoted attention to the beef; "there is nothing malignant about my nature, and the air you talk of is but a remnant of French manners caught while I was serving our Calvinistic brethren in that poor, benighted land. In me, sir, you behold him whom you may have heard of—who in the morning preached to the people in the beleaguered city of Rochelle, from the 2d verse of the 24th chapter of the book of Joshua, 'Your fathers dwell on the other side of the flood in the old times;' and who, in the evening, led them out to battle, and smote the Philistines' big and thigh—that is to say, broke through the stockade, and defeated two regiments of the guards."

"I have heard of the deed," replied Mr. Dry.

"Then you must have heard likewise," said the gentleman at the table, rising up at full length, and making the intruder a low bow, "of Master Deciduous Barecolt."

"I think I have, I think I have," said Mr. Dry.

"Then, again," cried Barecolt, "when I defended the pass in the Cevennes with only two

godly companions against the Count de Sosa and a hundred and fifty bloodthirsty papists, you must surely have heard of that exploit."

"I cannot say I have," replied Mr. Dry.

"Then, sir, you are ignorant of the history of Europe," answered the other, with a look of high indignation; "for I trust that the name of Deciduous Barecolt is known from the mouth of the Elbe to the mouth of the Danube, and will descend to posterity upon the stream of time, only rendered imperishable by that which destroys other things. Good-night, Mr. Dry. Now, Master Randal, I am ready to accompany you; shall we sing a psalm before we go?"

"No," replied Randal, abruptly; and, picking up his hat, he led the way out of the room.

The inn was situated near the extremity of the town; and at the distance of about two hundred paces from the door, the two strangers emerged from between the lines of houses, and found themselves among the hedgerows. Without any hesitation as to the track which he was to pursue, the elder gentleman mounted a stile to the right, and took a path which, crossing the fields, wound gradually up one slope after another till it reached the brow of the hill on which Bishop's Merton House was placed.

It was a fine, clear, moonlight night; and at the distance of about a mile from the mansion they caught a sight of its wide front, extending along the hills till the wings were concealed by a little wood, behind which, as they walked on, the whole building was speedily lost.

"It seems a fine old place," said Barecolt to his companion. "It puts me in mind of the Eccurial."

"More likely puts you in mind of the stocks," said Randal, "for you have both seen and felt the one, and never set eyes upon the other."

"How can you tell that I never saw it?" exclaimed his companion; "you have not had the dandling of me ever since I was a baby in arms."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Randal; "but I know you never have seen it, because you say you have. However, you must either speak truth to-night, or hold your tongue, or we are ruined. I did not stop you in your course with that round-headed knave at the inn, because I knew that you must void a certain quantity of falsehood in the day, and it was necessary to get rid of it before you came up here; for this young lord is not one to take counterfeit coin."

"The monster!" exclaimed Barecolt; "there is not a more cruel or barbarous creature in the earth than the man who drives from his door all the sweet little children of the imagination which you call lies. He is wanting in all human charity. Give me the generous and confiding soul, who believes every thing that is said to him, and enjoys the story of a traveller who relates to him wild scenes in lands he never has visited, just as much as if it was all as true as history."

"Which is itself a lie," rejoined the other.

"Had this young man's father been alive, you would have found a person after your own heart. He was a man of vast capabilities of belief. His mind was but a looking-glass, always representing what was before it; his religion was in the last sermon he had heard, his politics in the last broadsheet, his opinions those of his companions for the hour, his taste the

newest mode that he had seen. He was the quiescence of an ordinary-minded man. But his son is a very different being. But do you not see a strange light shining through the wood before us? Hark! there is an alarm-bell!" and, hurrying his pace, he issued forth from the wood some three hundred yards farther on, where the cause of the light they had seen became too visible.

Rising up from one of the flanking towers of the old house, in large white volumes to the very sky, was a tall column of smoke, spreading out towards the top, while from the building itself poured forth the rushing flame, like a huge beacon illuminating all the country round. Each window in that tower and the neighbouring wing emitted the same blaze; and it was very evident that, although a number of persons were seen moving about upon the terrace, engaged apparently in the endeavour to extinguish the fire, that it was making its way rapidly towards the rest of the house. The two strangers ran as fast as possible to give assistance. But, before I pursue their adventures on that night, I must turn to speak of all that had taken place within the mansion of Bishop's Merton during the evening preceding the disaster which I have described.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was, in the mansion of Bishop's Merton, one of those delightful old chambers which, like a warm and benevolent heart, have a nook for every one. It was a large, wide room, with a recess on one side big enough to have formed another room, and a lesser recess at each corner, on the same side, made by two small square turrets, each lighted by its own windows, and containing tables and chairs of its own, so that the studious or the meditative, but not the unsocial, could sit and read, or muse apart, without being actually cut off from the society assembled. The walls were all covered with tapestry, descended through many generations in the same family, and which had covered the walls of a similar chamber in an old castle, partly destroyed during the civil wars of the Roses, and pulled down at the commencement of the reign of Henry the Eighth.

Out from the tapestry, however, after an old fashion, which certainly showed pictures to much greater advantage than when plastered upon the face of the wall, stood a great many portraits of different degrees of art, supported at the lower part by a gilt iron bracket, and upheld in a slightly sloping position, by an iron bar at the top. From the cold, severe Holbein, to the rich and juicy Rubens, and the poetical Van Dyk, all the famous artists of the last two centuries had exercised their pencils in portraying the features of a race which had always been fruitful in beauty, and the history of the changeable mind of those two ages was shadowed forth in the varying costume in which the characters appeared. Nor is it, let me say, dear reader, in passing, a slight indication of the state of the popular mind that is afforded by the dress of the day. Look at the Cavalier in his long floating locks, his silks and velvets, and at the Roundhead, in his steeple hat, his straight-cut

coat and prim cloak, each with his heavy-buffed sword and large flapping gloves, and say whether Naseby field and Marston Moor, and all the deeds on either part, do not naturally, and not purely historically, connect themselves with such apparel; and then turn to ourselves, with our straight-cut frockcoats, neat, close-fitting boots, and other mathematical habiliments, which seem to have been fashioned by the rules and compasses of a Laputan sage, and tell me whether they do not plainly speak of an age of railroads and steamboats.

There, however, stood the pictures of the brave and beautiful of other times, looking down upon their once familiar halls, and the doings of their descendants, as the spirits of the dead may be supposed to do upon the actions of the children they have left behind; and there, in the oriel window, just about the time of day at which we commenced this tale, sat a creature, whom those long-gone bold warriors and lovely dames might look upon with pride, and own her of their blood. It was a lady of some twenty years of age, not very tall, but yet, if anything, above the middle height of women. She was very beautiful, too, in feature, with a skin as white as alabaster, and as smooth, yet with the rose glowing in her cheek, and her arched lips red and full of health. I have long discovered that it is impossible to paint beauty with the pen, and therefore I will say no more than may merely give the reader some idea of what kind and sort hers was of, more than the harmony which ought always, and generally does, in some degree, exist between the form and mind may be understood, than to draw a picture of which imagination would still have to fill up half the details. Though her skin, as I have said, was so fair, her hair, her eyebrows, and her eyes were dark, not exactly black—for in them all there was a gleam of sunny warmth which brightened, like the dawn, the deep hue of night. The expression of her countenance was generally gay and cheerful, but varying, often, as a heart quickly susceptible of strong feelings, and a mind full of imagination were affected by the events in which she took part, and the circumstances around her. Youth, and health, and bountiful nature had endued her form with manifold graces, and though her limbs were full and rounded in contour, yet they displayed in every movement lines of exquisite symmetry, and like the child of Joab, she was swift of foot as the wild roe. As is often the case with persons of quick fancy, her mind, though naturally of a cheerful and hopeful bent, was, nevertheless, not unfrequently overshadowed by a cloud of passing melancholy; and a look of sadness would come into her fair face, as if the consciousness which is in most hearts that this world of glittering delusions has its darker scenes, even for those of the brightest fate, made itself painfully felt at times when no apparent cause for grief or apprehension was near. But such shadows passed quickly away, and the general tone of her heart and her expression was, as we have said, bright and shiny.

Her father had been a man who took his ideas greatly from those among whom he lived. In short, he attributed too much importance to the opinions of his fellow-men. We may at-

tribute too little to them, it is true, and even great men are bound to pay some deference to the deliberate judgment of many; but it is usually, nay, invariably, a sign of weak understanding, to depend for the tone of our own thoughts upon those around. However, as he was thrown into the society of men who set great value upon accomplishments such as they were in those days, he had made a point of having his daughter instructed in all the lighter arts of the times. To sing, to dance, to play on various instruments, to speak the two languages most in fashion at the court, French and Italian, with the ease and accent of a native, had seemed to him matters of vast importance; and as she showed every facility in acquiring whatever he desired, he had no cause to be discontented with her progress. She might, perhaps, have been taught to consider such things of much importance too; but she had a mother, the safeguard of God to our early years. That mother was a woman of a high and noble mind, somewhat stern, perhaps, and rigid, yet not unkind or unfeeling; and between a parent weak, though possessed of talent, and one keen and powerful in intellect, though not quick or brilliant, it may easily be guessed which gave the strongest impress to the mind of the child. Thus Annie Walton learned, perhaps, somewhat to undervalue the accomplishments which to please her father she acquired, and though she possessed less of the stern, calm, determined character of her mother than her brother Charles, and more of the pliant and easy disposition of her father, yet she inherited a share of high resolution and firm decision, which was requisite, even in a woman, to enable her to encounter the dangers and difficulties of the times in which she lived.

She sat, then, in the oriel window of the hall at Bishop's Merton, reading a page, printed roughly on coarse paper, while now a smile, somewhat saddened, and now a look of anger, somewhat brightened by the half-faded smile, passed over her sweet face, as in one of the broad sheets of the day, which had been left with her a few minutes before by Mr. Dry, of Longsoken, she saw the doings of a Parliament, which began by asserting the rights of the people, and ended by attacking the just prerogatives of the crown; which commenced by opposing tyranny and deceit in the rulers of the land, and ended by far exceeding all the tyranny and deceit it had opposed, and adding the most heastily hypocrisy and violence, fraud, rapine, and cruelty, to the crimes and follies which it had found existing. She read and smiled—she read and sighed—for though her family had taken no part in the deeds of the last twelve months, and though her mother had been through life rather attached to the doctrine of the Presbyterians than their opponents, yet there was something in the cause of the Cavaliers, with all their faults, in their very rashness and want of all pretence—something in the cold-blooded hypocrisy and false pretences of the Parliamentarians, which had engaged her sympathies on the losing side, and roused her indignation against the successful.

While she was thus occupied, a horseman passed rapidly before the window towards the principal door of the house, crossing like a quick

bird in its flight, and, casting down the paper, she ran out, murmuring, "It is Charles!"

There was a large, old-fashioned vestibule hung with pikes and arms, corsets and head-pieces, and stage' aniles and hunting horns, and all the implements of real battle, and the mimic warfare of the chase. The door leading to the terrace stood wide open, with an old servant on either side; and as she bounded forward in the expectation of meeting her brother, with her countenance beaming with pleasure, to greet him on his return, a stranger entered and advanced at once towards her.

Annie Walton's face suddenly became graver, and a blush rose into her cheek; but the Cavalier advanced with a frank and unembarrassed air, walked straight up to her, and took her hand, as if he had been an old friend.

"You thought it was your brother," he said, with easy grace, saving her all trouble of explanation, "and you are disappointed, Miss Walton. Would that I had a sister to look so joyful on my return to my old halls, but your disappointment will have no long life. Charles Walton will be here ere the world be an hour older; and, in the mean time, you must show me and my poor beast fair hospitality till the master of the mansion comes himself to tell you more about his friend Sir Francis Clare."

He bowed as he thus introduced himself; and Annie Walton, with all courtesy, but a grave air, invited him to the hall where she had been sitting, trying to call to mind the name among those of all her brother's acquaintances. She could recollect no such person, however; and although there was in the frankness of the stranger's manner something that pleased her, yet she almost thought it too free, in one whom she could not believe to be very intimate with him. Yet there was a grace as well as an ease in his demeanour; a tone not easily described, but which can only be acquired by long, intimate habits of familiarity with persons of high mind and education; a self-possession, distinct from imprudence, which showed her at once that the visitor was not one of the wild and reckless roysterers of the court and army of King Charles, who presumed without merit, and endeavoured to cover vulgarity of spirit with self-confidence. She begged the stranger to be seated, he bowed, and let her take her place, while he remained standing before her, calculating rapidly what was passing through her thoughts, and, to say the truth, somewhat struck with the beauty of this cynosure of neighbouring eyes, who, whatever he might have expected to find, went far in loveliness beyond his imagination.

There was a momentary pause while she thought of what was next to come, but the stranger spoke first. "I must seem very bold, I fear, and somewhat too free, Miss Walton," he said, at length, "in thus treating you as an old acquaintance; but the circumstances of these days engender strange habits of rapidity in all our doings. Rough times abridge ceremonies, and, besides, when our thoughts are familiar even with those whom we have never met, a sort of one-sided friendship grows up in our breast towards them, which makes us forget that it is not reciprocal. I have so often heard your brother talk of you, so often conversed

with him of you, that I may think myself lucky that at our first meeting I did not offend you by calling you Annie."

"It would have surprised more than offended," replied his fair companion, with a smile: "but Charles will, I trust, soon make us better acquainted. Have you seen him lately?"

"Not for five years," answered Sir Francis Clare; "and yet, sweet lady, know more of his proceedings than you do, who parted with him but a week ago: not that he is deep-dyed in plots and conspiracies kept from his sister's ear, but simply because he wrote to me yesterday one of his brief but comprehensive notes, telling me what he purposed, and giving me a rendezvous here to day, which I, with my usual impatience, have run before by near an hour. I heard of him, too, as I came along; and though I found that I should be before him, yet I hurried on—not to surprise his sister all alone, and make her wonder what strange rash man had come to visit her, believe me."

"Such an object were little worth the spur, sir," replied the lady, laughing; "but if I understand you right, your friendship with my brother must have begun when he was in France."

"Long before that," replied the Cavalier; "but when last I parted with him he was in Italy, where he left me to return to his own house. We bade each other farewell under the Loggia de Lanzi, in the fair town of Florence."

"Oh, how I long to see that place," cried Annie Walton: "it is one of the dreams of my imagination, which, perhaps, may never be realized."

"Few dreams of the imagination ever are," answered her companion. "He who gives himself up to fancy is like a man led by a child, who tells him of all the wonderful things that he will show him in the garden of the world, and when he comes to see the marvels, finds them but May blossoms and brier roses, that fade as soon as gathered, and leave a bunch of thorns in his hand."

Annie Walton raised her eyes to the stranger's brow, and gazed at the rich floating hair that covered it, to see if she could trace any of the marks of that age which has proved the world and discovered its delusions. But all was youthful and open; there was nothing gray or grave; and she replied,

"You speak sadly of this earth and its enjoyments, sir; and yet, I would not part with fancy and all her pleasant deceptions if I could."

"Never! never!" cried Sir Francis Clare, eagerly. "If I may use a paradox, sweet lady, the deceptions of reality are ten times more dangerous than those of imagination. If all things are delusions except the hopes of a higher and holier world, let us keep the pleasant ones at least, and they are those of fancy—But what have we here—the last news from London?"

"The reply of the Parliament to the king's message," answered the lady; "and thirty one good reasons for rejecting his majesty's offers, with the gaily and soul-saving declaration of several pious men concerning popery and prelacy."

The stranger laughed.

"How easy is it," he cried, "to cover gross treason, not alone to king, but country, with

fair pretexts of freedom, or to hide what they themselves call the most carnal self-seeking, with the garb of religious zeal, and to give the fairest names to the blackest passions of our nature! 'Tis a trite remark, but one that forces itself upon us every day; and yet this is the trade that succeeds in the world, so that gross Deceit raises itself to high places, and sits in purple and fine linen, while Honesty is left to beg her bread, and plain Truth stands shivering in a ragged blanket."

"But I should think such barefaced hypocrisy as this," answered the lady, "would deceive no one. People may pretend to believe it, but it must be mere affectation, as bad as the hypocrisy itself."

"Your pardon, madam," replied the Cavalier; "there never yet was falsehood so open and impudent, which, often repeated and told with a smooth face, would not find many to give it ready credence. Not a day passes but we see some monstrous lie, decked out with strong assurances of sincerity and zeal, pass current with the multitude. Oh, lady, there is an appetite for falsehood in this world that makes the many-headed monster gorge the food, however dirty, and, like a hungry dog, pluck morsels from the very kennel. Yet there is some truth, too, in what these people say. I am not one to cover them with bad names; for, alas! however wrong they may be now, the king put himself in fault at first. The man who suffers himself to be compelled to do justice to others, will, some time or another, have to compel others to do justice to him; and he who has shunned his friends in time of need, will surely have to lament their loss when he has to struggle with enemies."

"And has the king done this?" asked Annie Walton.

"Strafford, Strafford!" said the Cavalier, with a melancholy shake of the head; "bold, firm-hearted, gallant Strafford. That fatal error was the downfall of King Charles. Where is the hand that now shall raise him up? Lady, when a general finds himself in a town about to be besieged by an enemy, he strengthens his fortifications, and throws down all the scattered houses and indefensible suburbs that might give the foes advantage in their approach; but the king pursued a different course: he threw down his defences, and maintained all the suburbs and weak points. But this is sorry conversation for a lady's ear," he continued; "what a fair scene does this window show. In riding through the low ground, I did not mark all the beauty round me."

"It is, indeed, as fine a view as any in the country round," replied Annie Walton; "and often, when I feel sad at heart, I come and gaze out here, and seem to find comfort and confidence from the sight."

"And are you ever sad at heart?" asked Sir Francis Clare, with a smile.

"Not very often, it is true," she replied; "but still, in the present disturbed state of the country, which is like one of those dark storms through which one can see no glimpse of coming sunshine, I cannot but sometimes feel fears and apprehensions—not for myself, indeed, for no one would hurt a woman, I suppose; but for my brother—and then I need the sight of things

which speak with a voice not to be misunderstood, of God's power, and his goodness too, to show me that, though the tempest may rage for a time, it will give place to brighter hours at last, and perhaps, in itself, work good even while it seems destined to destroy."

"Oh, may you feel ever thus," cried the Cavalier, eagerly; "for it was such faith brought back the dove to the ark at length. Yet often, when we see a world of roaring waters round us, and destruction on every side, the heart will sink, and trust and confidence give way for a time. And yet," he added, laughing, "I am not one to entertain many sombre thoughts; and if the gay companions of thoughtless hours could know with what sad conversation I have entertained a fair lady, they would recommend me a Geneva scull-cap and a straight black cloak. I can assure you, lady, our talk in the court is much less solemn. Except for an hour in the morning, when we speak soberly of war and policy as men take a walk after breakfast for a good digestion, our days pass much in the consideration of lace collars, the fashion of sword-knots, and of how to get them. The world, I believe, and most of the things in it, are not worth the waste of five minutes' heavy thought; and, weighed in a just balance, perhaps a madrigal and a charge of horse, a sonnet of tiffany poetry, and the plan of a campaign, are matters of much more nearly the same importance than we think. But there comes your brother, or I am mistaken."

"Yes, yes!" cried the lady, gladly gazing out of the open window into the valley, along which a small party of horsemen were riding, "he will be here directly;" and she and her companion, whose conversation had greatly won upon her, continued watching the progress of the young Lord Walton, as he rode rapidly along the valley, till he was hid behind the high-wooded banks, near which, as we have already related, he paused to hold a short conversation with poor Arrah Neil. They wondered what detained him so long under the trees; but, after a brief pause, he appeared again, and in a few minutes he sprang from his horse at the hall door.

CHAPTER IV.

"Ha, Francis," exclaimed Lord Walton, grasping the Cavalier's hand with warm eagerness, as soon as he had received the embrace of his sister, "are you here before me? You must have used the spur from Worcester if your letter left the good town before you."

"I have used the spur, Charles," replied his friend, "on purpose to outrun you, and introduce myself to this fair lady without your assistance. You know I always was the most impatient of mortals, and strange I fear she thought me; for I could plainly see that she had never heard the name of Francis Clare before," he added, with a gay laugh, and some emphasis on the words.

"Perhaps not," answered Lord Walton, with a grave smile; "but she must know you now, Francis, as one of her brother's dearest and oldest friends. However, I must send her away

from us for a minute, for I have a task for her, sad but pleasing, to perform. I just now found poor Arrah Neil, dear Annie," he continued; "she was sitting by the Bishop's Well, dark and sorrowful, as well she may be. The poor old man, Neil, is dead. They dragged him as far as Devizes, where the lamp that has burned so faintly for the last two years went out, and the poor girl has found her way back hither. Something must be done for her, Annie, and till we can settle what, she must stay here. I left Langan with her to bring her up; so see to her comfort, sister, for by her dress I think they must have robbed her by the way."

"Poor child!" cried Annie Walton, "I was sure the old man would die. Can these be really Christians, Charles, for a few rash words, spoken in haste, to take a man of seventy from his sick bed—"

"His words meant more than they seemed, Annie," answered her brother; "at least so I gather from their answer to my application for his release: but see to her comfort, dear girl, and then come back to us, for the poor thing spoke of some evil hanging over me here; and, though at times so strange, I have often remarked she speaks not lightly."

"No, indeed, Charles," replied his sister, with an anxious look. "Evil hanging over you! What can she mean?"

"I know not, Annie," rejoined Lord Walton. "Nothing has happened to cause you alarm, has there?"

"Nothing!" she answered. "Dry, of Long-soaken, was here this morning, but he was all smoothness and civility."

"That looks ill," said Sir Francis Clare. "He must be a Roundhead by his name; and, whenever they speak smoothly, beware of the serpent in the grass."

"And he is a serpent, if ever the earth produced one," answered Lord Walton, thoughtfully. "Did he speak smoothly and civilly! so, so! What was the object of his visit, Annie—or, had he any apparent object?"

"Purely, it seemed," replied Miss Walton, "to ask after my health during what he called your long absence. I told him your absence had not been long—only a week; and that you had already concluded your business with the committee, and would return to day. So, then, he left that paper with me, which he said must be marrow and fatness to all well-disposed noblemen like yourself. But, indeed, he seemed well affected towards you, and said, 'I now recollect something about the people of Bishop's Merton having encroached upon your land at Sarham, which he should be happy to set right for you, which he could do if you pleased, without your name appearing in the matter, so as not to affect your popularity with the God-fearing people of the place.'"

"Where did he learn I ever feared to have my name appear in any act I did!" asked Charles Walton, proudly. "'Tis but such low and creeping things as he is, who do things they dare not own. He had some other object—this is all a pretence! But go, dear Annie; there is Langan with the poor girl; perhaps she will tell you more than she would say to me; but do not press her, Annie, if she be unwilling. And now, Francis," he continued, as his sister left

the room, "first, welcome, after so long an absence; next, what is this serious business that you would speak with me upon?"

"Faith, but a little matter as this world goes," replied his friend, "and yet one which would have been considered mighty some ten years ago. Now men draw two straws for the longest, or toss up a crown piece to know which party they will choose, whether they will fight for their rightful king or his rebel Parliament—"

"Not quite so, Francis," replied Charles Walton, seriously: "with me, at least, the question would ever be a serious one. Whether I should draw my sword for the representatives of the people of England, when fighting for the just liberties of the land, or for a sovereign who has somewhat infringed them? even if the case stood exactly as the Parliament puts it; but—"

"I am glad you have added those words, Charles," interrupted the Cavalier, for "on them hangs all the rest. The king is willing to do ample justice to all men. Granted that he has committed faults—and who has greater cause to complain than I have!—granted that he has had advisers—granted that he sacrificed Strafford—"

"A terrible fault, indeed," replied Lord Walton.

"Granted that his exactions were unjust—ship-money a breach of the best and soundest laws—the Star Chamber an iniquitous tyranny—still, these errors were a part of his inheritance; and perhaps, if we looked closely, we should find that our fathers who suffered, and by suffering encouraged such things, who fawned upon the hand that pressed them to the ground, who bowed readily to tyranny whenever it stretched forth its rod, have as great a share of the responsibility as he has, who only used the powers transmitted to him by his father. But I come not to discuss such questions, Charles Walton. The king has committed errors—he grieves for them, he is ready to repair them—he has done all that man can do to remedy evils past, and provide security against their recurrence. He calls upon every loyal subject to aid him, not only in defending the throne itself, but the country, from those who would evidently shake its Constitution to the ground, overthrow its best institutions, and establish, if not the reign of anarchy, the rule of a many-headed monster, which will, if tolerated, end in a despotism more terrible than any we have yet seen within the land. And will Charles Walton, gallant and chivalrous as he is known to be, will he refuse to obey that call? Or is he, who was wont to be so clear-sighted and so true, one of those who believe that the pretences of the Parliament are true: that they seek but to reduce the power of the crown within due limits, lop the prerogative of those branches that bore oppression, and secure the freedom of the people, yet leave the stability of the throne? Or does he approve of hypocritical pretences even to gain just ends? No, no! I know him better."

"Certainly," replied the young nobleman, "I neither approve the practices, nor believe the pretences of the Parliament. But I have hitherto trusted, my dear friend, though they may be now intoxicated with authority, the exercise of which is new to them, and in their pride may encroach upon both the prerogative of the crown

and the liberty of the subject—for I can conceive a Parliament to become a more terrible tyrant than even a monarch—yet I say I have trusted that the wiser and the better members of that body will recover from the drunkenness that some have felt, and the fears that have affected others; and that, at all events, if any dangerous and outrageous exercise of power should take place, those who have never favoured the arbitrary use of the royal prerogative, or the licentious exactions of the Commons, may have sufficient weight to counterbalance that authority which is but delegated by the people, and which the people can again resume."

"Fatal confidence," exclaimed the Cavalier, with a dark and melancholy look, "which never has been, never will be justified! Yet it is one that in all civil strifes many wise and many good men have entertained, till they found, when too late, how cruelly they had deceived themselves; till, hanging between two parties and supporting neither, they saw the one sink lower and lower, and the other, which perhaps they most condemned, rise into power, and go on in evil; and then, when they strove to arrest the course of wrong, found themselves either carried away by the current, and involved in wickedness they would fain have opposed, or sunk beneath the torrent with those who endeavoured to divert it while yet it was feeble, and whose efforts they might have rendered successful, had they joined therein in time. Let me tell you, Charles, that in the history of all contentions, such as those that now shake the land, there is a time when the balance of sincerity and right is clearly on one side, and that it is then true lovers of their country should step in with their whole strength to turn the balance of power on that side also. There is such a time, believe me, now is the moment!"

"Perhaps it is," answered Lord Walton, thoughtfully, "I said, my friend, that I had hitherto felt the impressions I described. I did not deny that they are somewhat shaken, perhaps more than I believe."

"When that time has come," continued the Cavalier, without appearing to mark his reply, "it is the duty of every man to ask himself, On which side is now the right? On which side is now the danger? and, casting away the memory of old faults and old grievances, to choose boldly and conscientiously between the two. If he chooses well, it will be easy for him, at any after time, to guard against a renewal of errors on the part of those whom he supports; but if, from any fear of such a renewal, he turns to the side which he knows to be acting amiss, he commits himself forever to the errors he supports, and can never hope to stop their course or avert their consequences. What I ask you, then, to do, is to choose! I say not, join the king: I say not, oppose the Parliament: I merely say, lay your hand upon your heart, and, forgetting mistakes that are past, ask yourself which is now right and which is now wrong, and choose as your conscience shall direct."

Lord Walton paused for a few moments in deep thought; then, giving his hand to his friend, he said, "I will! Ask me no more at present, Francis; nor inquire whether, when I say I will, I might not say I have. Revolutionaries

such as these had better be spoken of as little as possible till they can be executed. Stay till to-morrow morning, then back to the king: your farther presence here might be dangerous to yourself and hurtful to your cause. And now to other things: how long had you been here before I came?"

"Long enough to find it a dangerous abode, good friend," replied the Cavalier. "In truth, Walton, if you have not got an angel here, you have what is more like one than any thing my eyes have yet seen."

"Oh! I know your gallant speeches," answered Charles Walton, with a laugh, his face losing the grave cast which was habitual to it, and brightening with cheerful light; "but Annie is well accustomed to hear sweet things, and I fear not the effect of any highfrown Southern compliments on her little heart, which, however gentle, is firm enough to stand a longer siege than any you will have time to give it. But," he added, while his brow grew sad again, "I will own to you, Francis, it is her future fate that in these troublous times half makes a coward of me; and, though knowing what is right, that will I do, yet there is a hesitating fear within me, that in the course I am destined to pursue, I may bring down sorrow and misfortune upon that bright, kind being, who has been ever my sunshine and my hope."

"I can feel that it must be so, Charles," replied his friend, gravely. "Had I a sister such as that, it would be so with me. Therein I can do little to console, and perhaps less to counsel or to help you. But yet, Charles Walton, you know I am something of the ancient knight—my sword and heart for my king and my fair lady; and without any rash promising of love for one whom I have only known an hour, such as one half of our gay courtiers would make, I promise you, that whatever befalls you, so long as life and strength lasts, my next thought, after my duty to God and my sovereign, shall be to care for the protection and safety of my friend's sister."

Lord Walton smiled, with a look in which pleasure and grief were strangely blended, but he replied nothing, merely once more pressing Clare's hand.

"Why do you smile, Charles?" asked the Cavalier. "Is it that you think me too young, too light, too gay, to take such a task upon myself. My honour, my regard, you do not doubt, I know, and as for the rest, these are days when the old times of chivalry must revive, or the sun will set in darkness indeed; and in those ancient periods, men young as I am have, with a holy devotion, been the safeguards and protectors of dames wellnigh as fair and bright as this, if we may believe the tales we read."

"But those tales still ended in marriage, Francis," said Lord Walton.

"Well, there let it!" cried the Cavalier, gayly. "Here I dedicate my heart and sword to her. Those bright eyes shall be my loadstars on the road to glory, her smile give double vigour to my arm, and fresh sharpness to my lance. There, Walton, is not that the true Orlando? But, seriously, what meant your somewhat rueful smile just now? Was it that you thought the gay youth of former days but little fit to supply a brother's place in time of need; or,

perhaps, still less, to take a husband's duties on him, if fate and circumstances should draw your sister's heart towards him? But let me tell you, Charles, these are times that make even the thoughtless think; and when I buckled me to the cause I serve, I cast away and left in foreign lands all but the higher purposes of the heart."

"No, no, Francis," replied Lord Walton, interrupting him, "it was neither doubt, nor fear, nor mockery, that made me smile. You do not suppose that, did I not know and see all that is noble and generous in your nature, and bright and keen in your mind, I would have taken you to my heart as I have done. That there might be some weeds in the garden, I will not deny; but they were only such as an hour's labour would pluck out with ease, or such as would wither away under the first hot sun, and leave the flowers and fruit behind uninjured. I sink but to think that, some five years ago, when we were both in happier days than these, I often thought that I would gladly give my Annie to my early friend, but little dreamed that times might come when he himself would offer, ere he had seen her twice, to be her defender and protector in case of her brother's death: and who shall say, Francis, how soon such loss may call for such support. But here she comes again; let us say no more of this; but thank you, thank you from my heart for all you promise. I know right well that promise will be kept, if it cost your last drop of blood."

The faces of both gentlemen were grave when Annie Walton joined them, and on hers too there were traces of some tears. "Poor Arrah Neil!" she said: "hers indeed has been a hard fate. She has made me weep with the tale of the old man's sufferings, so mildly and so sweetly did she tell it. But I could obtain no farther information in regard to the danger she apprehended might befall you, Charles, and I cannot but think that her words were spoken in one of those strange, dreamy moods that sometimes fall upon her."

"I think so too," answered Lord Walton; "at least it may be so. Where have you lodged her, Annie?"

"She is with good Dame Rachael now," answered his sister; "but for to-night, she is to have the little room near the west tower, and to-morrow you must tell me more of your plans for her, Charles."

"I will, I will," replied Lord Walton, "to-morrow—ay, to-morrow;" and he fell into thought.

The evening passed more cheerfully than the conversation of the morning promised. All seemed anxious to snatch a few hours from the gloomy thoughts that hung over the times, and but few allusions were made to the circumstances of the day; but any other subject, which minds full of rich stores could produce, was chosen, as if to exclude more sombre topics. From time to time, indeed, both Annie Walton and their new companion would for a moment or two look grave and sad, as some passing cloud of thought swept over them; but the young lord, whose power over himself was great, kept the same even tenour—not gay, for such was not his disposition; not gloomy or meditative, for he did not choose to be so; but

calm and easy, conversing without apparent effort on a thousand varied things, and never, for an instant, showing the least absence or forgetfulness. Yet perhaps all felt that there were dangers and disasters abroad on every side, though they sat there as a cheerful party, with the windows of the heart closed against the storm that raged without.

There was but one moment when a shadow seemed to fall upon all, and that, too, was after a song. Charles Walton had asked his sister to sing before they parted for the night; and after some thought, seeking in vain for a livelier strain, she chose—perhaps from the irrepressible anxieties of her own heart—a little ballad which had been a favourite of her mother's.

THE SONG.

"Hope sang a song of future years,
Replete with sunny hours;
When present sorrow's dew-like tears
Should all be hid in flowers.

"But Memory backward turned her eyes,
And taught the heart to fear
More stormy clouds, more angry skies,
With such succeeding year.

"But still Hope sing, as by that voice
Such warnings were given,
In louder strains bade youth rejoice,
And eye look on to heaven."

Each kept silence for a minute or two after the song was done, and each gave a sigh; but then the Cavalier would fain have persuaded Miss Walton to sing again. For her voice was one of those, full of native music, which the ear longs for when once heard, as the weary heart of manhood thirsts to taste again the fearless joys of infancy. But she declined, saying she was somewhat weary, and shortly after the little party separated for the night.

Charles Walton shook his friend's hand warmly as they parted, at a yet early hour, and adding to the good-night, "We will speak more before you go to-morrow," he himself retired to his chamber to pass several hours in meditation ere he lay down to rest.

As soon as he was alone, the young lord sent away a servant who was waiting for him, and then leaned his head upon his hand for some ten minutes without moving. At length he raised his eyes to a heavy sword that hung above the old carved mantel-piece, rose, took it down, drew it from the sheath, and gazed upon the blade. There were some dents and notches in the edge; and saying in a low tone, "It has done good service—it may do more," he thrust it back again, and hung it up as before. "I will go to my cabinet and write two lines to the king," he added, after a short pause; but then, again, he stopped and meditated, murmuring, "No, it were better not to write; such documents are dangerous. I will send a message. I see they suspect me already. It were as well to destroy the commission and those other papers—and, if at all, at once. I will do it now. What is the matter?" he continued, as some one knocked at the door.

"Charles! Charles!" cried his sister, coming into the room; and as he sprang to meet her, he saw her face was very pale.

"There is a terrible smoke," she exclaimed, "and a rushing sound like fire."

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"Where? where?" asked her brother, eagerly hurrying towards the door.

"In the corridor, beyond my room," answered Annie, "towards the west wing. Oh, bid them ring the alarm-bell."

"On no account! on no account!" cried her brother, darting out. "Call all the servants, Annie. Run, Alice," he continued, to one of his sister's maids, who had followed her pale and trembling, "send Hugh and Roger hither, and then call the rest. Smoke, indeed! There is fire somewhere! Quick, girl, quick! Go back, my Annie, and dress yourself again. I will soon tell you more;" and, thus saying, he hurried on through the wide gallery, upon which the door of his bedroom opened, and then along the corridor beyond.

The smoke grew thicker at each step he took, the cracking and rushing sound of fire soon became audible, and then a fitful flash broke across the obscurity, like that of a signal gun seen through a heavy mist.

In a minute he was at a large door which closed the end of the corridor, and through the neighbouring window he could see the projection of one of the flanking towers with a small loophole showing a red glare within.

"Here is the fire," he cried, "in my own cabinet! How can this have happened!" and he laid his hand upon the latch. The door was locked. He tried to turn the key, but it was embarrassed. "Bring me an axe," he exclaimed, hearing some of the servants following him rapidly. "Bring me an axe directly! quick, quick! all the papers will be burned;" and again he tried to turn the key.

"The charter chests were removed, my lord, to the next room," said the good servant Langan. "I moved them myself, by your own order, just before we went, that the floor might be repaired."

The young lord laid his hand upon his brow for an instant, and then said,

"Let the rest perish, then! It is no matter;" and, just as he spoke, the alarm-bell rang loud and long.

"What fool has done that!" exclaimed Charles Walton. "Ah! Francis, is that you!" he continued, speaking to Sir Francis Clare, who was up and following him fully dressed; "a word in your ear: mount your horse quick and be gone," he whispered. "We shall have all the country on us in half an hour. See, there are some twenty on the terrace already. Langan, here: go the round with this gentleman to the stables by the back way, then through the wood with him till he is beyond the grounds. Francis, say I am determined!" he added again, lowering his voice. "You shall see me soon. Away, away, good friend! you know not the people here."

By this time servants were hurrying up with buckets of water, and with axes to break down the door; but, before he suffered that to be done, Lord Walton turned to one of those behind, saying, "See to poor Arrah Neil; she is in the chamber just beneath us. Take her to your lady's room. Now, Roger, you and Dick move out the chests from the place where Langan says he put them. Take them down to the terrace, but set some one to watch them. Hark! there is something fallen within."

"The great case of books, my lord, by the sound," said one of the men.

"Now give me an axe," cried the young nobleman; and with a few blows he dashed the lock off the door, and pushed it open, bidding the men throw in the water as he did so.

Out burst the flames and smoke, however, with such fury that all were forced to run back; and as it somewhat cleared away, the frightful scene of destruction that the interior of the tower displayed, too plainly showed there was no possibility left of saving that part of the building. "Now, my good men," cried the young lord, "let as many as can find buckets keep pouring on the water. The rest help me to cut away the woodwork between the tower and the rest. Some run up to the corridor above, break down the panelling, and throw it back away from the flames. Fear not, but at all risks cut off the tower from the rest of the house. Call some of those men up from below. Why do they stand idle there?"

The scene of hurry and confusion that succeeded can be imagined by those who have witnessed the consternation produced by a fire in a rural district, where few of those means and appliances which in great towns exist in plenty, but often are found ineffectual even there, are not to be met with at all. To prevent the flames from extending to the rest of that wing was found impossible, notwithstanding all the efforts of the noble master of the mansion, and the strenuous exertions of his servants, who speedily recovered from the first confusion of surprise, and recollected the old military habits which they had acquired in former days. The tenantry, too, who flocked up at the sound of the alarm-bell, gave eager but not very efficient help, as well as a number of the townsfolk; but still the fire gained ground, extended from the tower to the rooms in the wing, ran along the cornices, caught the beams, and threatened the whole building with destruction, when a tall, grave stranger in a black cloak and hat walked calmly up to Lord Walton, who had come down to the terrace to give directions to the people below, and said, in a low tone,

"A few pounds of gunpowder, my lord, and a linen bag laid above that doorway and under the coping-stone, will separate the fire from the building. The alone passage cuts it off below; there is but a narrow gallery above, and if you can but break up the corridor—"

"I see! I see!" cried Lord Walton. "Thanks, sir, thanks. Run, Hugh, to the armory; you will find some powder there."

"I beg, sir, that I may be permitted to make the suggestion," cried a tall man in flaunting apparel. "At the famous siege of Rochelle I constructed the immense petard wherewith we blew up the—"

"I thank you, sir," replied the master of the mansion, looking at the person who addressed him from head to foot with a quick but marking gaze, "I will make it myself;" and, without farther notice, he proceeded to give the necessary orders, and to take precautions both to ensure the safety of all persons near, and to guard the building as much as possible from damage by the explosion.

When all was ready, he went into the house

to bring his sister forth, lest by any chance the rooms in which she had hitherto remained should be shaken more than he expected; and then, after having placed her at a distance, he himself fired the train, which, being unconfined except at one part, carried the flame in an instant to the bag of powder, causing it to explode with a tremendous roar. A quantity of brickwork was thrown into the air; the gallery above fell in the moment after; and then, after a short pause, a tall neighbouring tower, between the place where the powder had taken effect and that where the fire was raging, bulged out about half way up, and then rushed down, strewn the terrace with a mass of broken ruins.

In the anxiety and excitement of the moment, Lord Walton had observed little but what was passing immediately before him; but as he marked the effect, and was turning round to look for his sister, and tell her that the rest of the mansion was saved, the stranger in black, who had spoken to him before, once more addressed him in a low voice, saying,

"You had better look to those chests, my lord; Colonel Thistleton is eyeing them somewhat curiously. As for me, I will wish you good night; I love not the neighbourhood of Parliamentary commissioners; but if you want good help at need, which perhaps may be the case soon, you have only to send a trusty servant to inquire for Martin Randal at Waterbourne, ten miles hence, and you will have fifty troopers with you in two hours."

"I understand! I understand, major," replied Lord Walton. "God speed you, with my best thanks, Colonel Thistleton! What came he here for?"

"No good," replied Randal, walking away and beckoning to his tall companion, who followed him with a pompous stride, while Lord Walton turned towards the spot to which he had directed his attention. He there perceived, for the first time, three men on horseback, and one who had dismounted and was speaking with a servant who had been placed to watch the two large chests of papers which had been removed from the next wing of the building.

As Lord Walton gazed at him, he stooped down once more to look at the chests with a curious and inquiring eye, and striding up to him at once, the young nobleman demanded, in a stern tone,

"Who are you, sir! and what do you want with those cases?"

"My name, my lord, is Thistleton," replied the other; "a poor colonel, by the permission of Providence, in the service of the Parliament of England; and when matters are a little more composed, I will inform your lordship, as my errand is with you, what excited my curiosity in regard to these cumbersome packages."

"Oh! Colonel Thistleton! that is a different affair," answered Lord Walton. "As soon as I have ascertained that all farther danger of the fire spreading is past, I will have the honour of entertaining you, as far as my poor house, half destroyed as it is, will admit."

The Parliamentary colonel bowed gravely, and the young nobleman in then proceeded to give farther directions to his people, mingling with commands respecting the fire and the security

of the rest of the mansion, sundry orders, spoken in a low tone, to those servants in whom he could most rely, and to some of his principal tenants.

When he had assured himself that all was safe, and had set a watch, he returned to his sister's side, and led her back to the house, whispering as he went.

"Keep two of your maids with you in your chamber to-night, Annie. See to poor Arrah Neil; and at dawn to-morrow, dear girl, make preparations for a journey. Ask no questions, sweet sister, but pack up all that you most value—all trinkets, jewels, gold and silver, for we may, perhaps, have to go far." Annie Walton gazed at him with a look of sorrowful, half-bewildered inquiry; but he added, "I cannot explain now, dear one; I will tell you more to-morrow;" and she followed him silently into the house, where he left her, and at once went back to show as much courtesy to Colonel Thistleton and his companions as the feelings of his heart would permit.

CHAPTER V.

"This is a lamentable and very sad visitation, my lord," said Colonel Thistleton, as soon as he was seated with two companions in the large room we have before described.

"It is indeed, colonel," replied Lord Walton, "and will cost me at least ten thousands pounds to repair; so that I hope you have not come for any thing like a benevolence, such as our kings of old used sometimes to levy upon their subjects, for I could ill spare one to the honourable house just now—Langan," he continued to the servant who appeared at the door, "have wine and meat set out in the hall. We shall all want refreshment."

"No, my lord," replied Colonel Thistleton, with some degree of hesitation; "the houses of Parliament resort to no illegal and unjustifiable acts of taxation. Labouring but for the defence of themselves, of the king's person, liberty, laws, and the kingdom, they take care to abide by the true rights and customs of the country; but, at the same time, my lord, they think it but proper and necessary, as well for the safety of the state as for the exculpation of persons unjustly accused, to inquire into and examine, either by the judges appointed by law—or by a committee of their own body, where any highly honourable and devout person is subjected to calumny—into all charges of resistance to the authority of the two houses, or of conspiracy for the purpose of levying war, and farther endangering the condition of the poor distracted realm."

The colour somewhat increased in Lord Walton's cheek, but without pause he replied gravely.

"They are quite right, sir; and if, as I gather from what you say, you are come into this part of the country upon such an errand, you will find me very ready and willing to give you every assistance in my power."

Now the commission which Colonel Thistleton had to perform was of a nature somewhat delicate; for the demeanour of the Walton

family, at the first resistance shown to the arbitrary proceedings of the court, had been favourable to the views of general freedom, which were then alone apparent on the side of the Parliament; and though it had become evident that the young lord had grown cold as they stretched their pretensions, and had even remonstrated against several of their proceedings, yet his course had not been so decided as to cut off all hope of attaching him to the party favourable to resistance of the royal authority by arms, while the task that the worthy committee man was charged to execute was one likely to alienate him for ever, if the grounds for suspicion were found unreasonable. However, he was a skilful man, ever ready to take advantage of opportunity, and he therefore replied,

"I was quite sure, my lord, that we should find every readiness in your lordship. We have, indeed, the unpleasant duty to perform, (which I trust we shall do discreetly), of investigating charges against a number of persons in this county; but, as it is advisable that those in whose affection and loyalty we have the utmost confidence should set an example to others, against whom there is just cause of suspicion, it is as well that I should inform your lordship that not long since, at Chippenham, a false and calumnious accusation was made against you to our worthy brother, Dr. Bastwick, here present—"

"Of which I do not credit a word," added the doctor.

"Charging you with countenancing the cruel preparations for war made by the king against his loyal subjects, and with having entered into correspondence with his majesty, and received a commission under his hand to levy horse against the honourable houses."

He paused as if for a reply; and Lord Walton, with a frowning brow and flushed cheek, answered,

"So, sir, I am to suppose, in short, that you have come hither to examine my house, and search for the correspondence you speak of?"

"Exactly, sir," replied a less prudent member of the committee named Batten; but Thistleton cut him short by adding, "We were perfectly sure that your lordship, whose family have always been godly and well disposed, would rejoice at an opportunity of showing the world how readily you would submit to the authority of Parliament, and clear yourself of all false and unjust reproaches."

"Should such reproaches against a person of such a character be listened to for a moment?" asked the young nobleman; "and, on my word, gentlemen," he added, "you are somewhat bold men to venture on the task."

"Not so bold as you give us credit for, my lord," replied Batten; "there is a troop of horse under your park wall."

"Then it seems," rejoined Lord Walton, "that you did not really calculate upon such unresisting submission as you affected to expect at first. I must, of course, yield to force. However," he continued, with a smile, "I am certainly not prepared to resist, even if I were willing."

"That want of preparation shows your lordship to be innocent," answered the cautious

Thistleton: "a point upon which I have no doubt. It was judged necessary to institute inquiries into all cases of malignant resistance to the authority of Parliament in this county: and it was to meet any opposition in such instances that the troop of horse was sent, not against your lordship, of whose conduct we are quite sure, though we thought it would show unrighteous partiality if we did not in some way notice the charges made against you—"

"Charges made upon oath, be it remarked," said Dr. Bastwick.

"Well, gentlemen," rejoined Lord Walton, "it is useless to discuss this question farther. I will even take it for granted that you have due warrant for your proceeding, and merely ask what you intend to do next?"

"Why, the fact is this, my very good lord," replied Thistleton: "the information stated that we should find the papers in question in the west tower, in a chamber used by your lordship as a cabinet or writing room, on the first floor from the ground. Now, I was informed but now, that two large chests which I saw on the terrace without, contained writings of value, which had just been removed from the fire. It would be satisfactory to us to look into those cases."

"Surely not to-night," said the young nobleman.

"I think it would be expedient," said Thistleton.

"It would prevent evil surmises," added Bastwick.

"No time like the present," cried Batten. "The king's commission might be gone before to-morrow."

"The keys, I fear, have been lost in the fire," answered Lord Walton, giving him a look of contempt.

"They will be easily broken open," replied Batten.

"I may not exactly like to have all my papers left open to the world," said the young nobleman, gravely: "but, having now clearly ascertained how far the suspicions of the Parliament really go, I will make no farther objection. But I give you all notice, that I protest against this act; and that, when next I take my place among the peers of England, I will move for an inquiry into the whole proceeding—Without, there! Bring in those cases of papers, and some instrument for forcing open the locks." Thus saying, he rose, and, turning to the window, looked out upon the terrace, which was still partially illuminated by the fitful glare of the decaying fire.

In a few minutes four stout servants appeared carrying in the chests, and having received orders to break them open, soon laid the contents bare before the eager eyes of the Parliamentary commissioners. Great, however, was their disappointment to perceive nothing on the top but old deeds and parchments, with many a waxen seal pendant from its broad riband. They were not so easily contented, however, and proceeded to turn out the whole contents, strewing the floor of the saloon with yellow papers, while Lord Walton spoke a few words to Langan, who left the room.

"Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied?" asked the young nobleman, at length, when the bot-

tom of each case was laid bare. "If so, the servants shall replace the papers, and we will to supper."

The committee whispered together for a moment ere they replied, but Lord Walton could catch the words "No, no! not now—To-morrow at daybreak—There has evidently been no preparation—Have up the troop by that time," and other broken sentences, which evidently showed him that farther proceedings were in contemplation.

"We will, my lord, put off any farther requisitions till to-morrow," Colonel Thistleton replied at length, "upon your lordship pledging us your word of honour that you will not leave the house, nor send out of it any paper of any kind or sort whatsoever."

"I shall most assuredly leave the house," replied Lord Walton, "for I am going in five minutes to assure myself that the fire will spread no farther. But if you mean that I am not to absent myself, I have no intention of so doing, and will promise to stay and entertain my unexpected guests as befits their quality and commission; nor will I send hence or make away with any paper, from the warrant of array directed by Henry II. to my ancestor, down to the cellar-book of the old butler; so now, sir, to supper, and let us forget for the time all that is unpleasant in our meeting. The day will come, and that before the world is a week older, when I will deal with this matter in the proper place and in the proper manner."

"Be that as you please, my lord," replied Thistleton; "we doubt not we shall be justified. Myself and Dr. Bastwick will in the meantime gladly accept your hospitality. Captain Batten, however, may be wanted with his troop."

"Nay!" cried the young lord, "it were a pity to deprive yourselves of one of your most able and active members. If Captain Batten have any orders to give, he can send them in writing. There lie paper and pens, and I remarked that he had a trooper without. My wine is good, gentlemen, and venison is yet in season."

"It will do as well to write," said Batten, who, always ready to take his part in all that was unpleasant, was not without inclination to share in things more agreeable; and, proceeding to the writing-table in the window, he had soon concocted a hasty note, which he carried out himself, while the rest, with the owner of the mansion, proceeded to supper.

When the meal was over—and the commissioners did not spare it—Lord Walton ordered them to be conducted to the rooms prepared for them, and took leave, saying, "To-morrow, gentlemen, at five, if you please, we will proceed to farther business. In the mean while, good-night."

The beds were soft and downy, the guests of Lord Walton tired with the fatigues of the preceding day, and it was somewhat later than the hour appointed when the members of the committee rose; and then, on looking forth from his window, Captain Batten was surprised and disappointed not to see his troop of horse drawn up in the park, as he had ordered them to muster there by half past four. His two companions were down before him, and he found them with the noble owner of the mansion in the hall. Lord Walton immediately signified in a gen-

tone that it would be better to proceed on their search; and the task was sooner begun than ended, for Bishop's Merton House, even in its dismembered state, was not easily examined from one end to another. Room after room was ransacked; every article of furniture which could be supposed to conceal papers was subjected to the perquisitions of the three commissioners; and it must be recollected, that in those days people had not multiplied the luxuries and conveniences of life to such a degree as scarcely to be able to turn amid the crowd of superfluities. Still nothing was discovered; for Lord Walton, though young, was a man of regular habits, and his papers were not all scattered over his dwelling, but gathered regularly into one repository.

At length Colonel Thistleton, after having twice passed through the corridor and gallery, pointed to a door in the former, saying, "We have omitted that room several times, my lord. It may be necessary that we examine there, merely for the sake of making our task complete. You will understand me clearly, my most honourable friend, that I am perfectly satisfied, and, indeed, was so from the first; but we must be enabled to say that we have left no part of the mansion unseen."

The young nobleman heard him to the end, and then replied gravely,

"Those are my sister's apartments, sir."

"Nevertheless, my lord—" answered Dr. Bastwick.

But Lord Walton cut him short with a frowning brow and a flushed cheek.

"There is no nevertheless, sir," he said. "Those are my sister's apartments—that is enough: let me see the man that dares wag a foot towards them."

"Nay, my good lord," cried Thistleton, in a mild and deprecating tone, "we mean no offence. If the lady sleeps, we can wait her waking. We need not go in now."

"Nor now, nor never, sir," answered the young nobleman, sternly. "There are no papers of mine there; of that I pledge my honour. If that satisfies you, well."

"But it does not, sir," cried Batten.

"Then that is well also," answered Lord Walton, turning away with a look of scorn.

Thistleton spoke a word to his two companions, and then followed the young nobleman, exclaiming,

"My lord, my lord."

"You speak loud, sir," rejoined Charles Walton. "I will hear you in the hall. Remember, there are people who can sleep despite of Parliamentary committees."

"This is too insolent!" cried Batten. "If you arrest him not, Master Thistleton, I will."

"Leave him to me," answered the colonel, gravely. "A committee of the house must not be heeded by the best man in the realm. Leave him to me;" and, thus saying, he followed the young lord down the stairs.

When they were in the hall, in which were several servants, Lord Walton paused in the midst.

"Now, gentlemen," he said, "what are your further commands?"

"I have but to ask, my lord," manded This-

tleton, "whether you are disposed to resist the lawful authority of Parliament!"

"The unlawful exercise of authority it does not possess, you mean," replied the peer. "But, not to cavil at words, sir—if I say I am, what then?"

"Why, then I should be obliged to do that which would be most unpleasant to me," replied Colonel Thistleton.

"I rather think, however, that such must be the result, sir," rejoined Charles Walton, with a cold and indifferent air.

"I mean, sir, that I shall be compelled to put you under some restraint," said Thistleton, with an angry brow, "which must certainly be done if—"

"If I permit you," added Lord Walton, seeing that he paused. "Colonel Thistleton, you are mistaken," he continued, advancing towards him. "I arrest you, sir, for high treason, in the king's name! Give up your sword!" and he laid his hand firmly on his shoulder.

"Dr. Bastwick shrunk back and looked towards the door; and while the colour died away in Batten's cheek, Thistleton shook off the young lord's grasp, exclaiming,

"Call up the horse from the window, Batten!" and, as he spoke, he drew his blade.

"They are not there!" answered Batten, with shaking knees.

"No, sir, they are not there," rejoined the master of the mansion; "those that are left of them are now galloping back to escape Major Randall's keen riders. You may have heard of his name, sir; and it would be well to put up your weapon and submit to what cannot be avoided. Call in a party, Langan."

"Well, my lord," cried Thistleton, thrusting back his sword into the scabbard, "this is a most shameless breach of—"

"Of what, sir?" demanded Lord Walton. "You came hither upon an unsavoury errand. You have attempted to cozen me from the beginning. Without lawful power or authority, you have infringed upon the rights of an Englishman; and I told you that I would stay here to deal with my unexpected guests as befitted their quality and their commission. But mark me, Colonel Thistleton, had you been moderate and wise—had you carried on your search with decency, you should have gone from this house without hinderance or molestation. I would have remembered that I had given the Parliament no greater intimation of my intentions than they have given me, and treated you with civility and respect; but you have exceeded all propriety; you have pried where no likelihood existed of finding what you sought; you have even expressed the purpose of intruding on the privacy of my sister's chamber. The measure is full, gentlemen, and it is now too late. You are all three prisoners under arrest, and it will be for his majesty to determine the full extent of your deserts. You see it is in vain to resist," he added, pointing to the door, where stood a party of soldiers fully armed. "Take them back to their chambers, Langan; suffer no communication between them; place a sentry at each door, and then return to me."

The members of the committee looked dolefully in each other's faces, but they well saw that what the young nobleman said was but too

true, regarding the uselessness of remonstrance or opposition, and with bent heads and dejected countenances they were led away.

CHAPTER VI.

Now, Roger Hartup," said the young lord, as soon as the deputies were gone, "tell me more of this news. You were with the party, it seems."

"Why, yes, my lord," replied a tall, long-boned Wiltshire man, dressed in the full colour of the house of Walton, with broadsword by his side and pistols in his belt; "Langan took me with him without saying a word of where he was going. He told me afterward that he was obliged to come back for fear your lordship should need him, and that I was to stay with the major and his troop, because I knew all the lanes and by-ways, and, moreover, loved playing with hand and arm."

"It was well bethought," said his master; "they might need a guide."

"I don't know, my lord," replied the servant; "but the major seemed to know all the hedge-rows as if he had been born among them. But, as soon as he had heard Langan's message, he gave the order to muster, and be ready in an hour. That was about half past one, my lord; for we had scattered the pebbles about as we went, I warrant, and before half past two, the troop were in their saddles, and moving down at a brisk trot by Lumby Lane, and then at a canter over the common. That brought us to Hilldown, where all the folks were asleep, and then we had three miles of high road to Rushford. As we were crossing the brook, or, rather, letting the horses drink, for the major had a care to the beasts' mouths, it being a hot night, we heard a trumpet sound Bishop's Merton way; so, then, he gave the order to trot, and, taking the cart-road, we came upon the edge of the meadows, where we could see the road up to the house, and yet have shelter of the alders; and there we sat quite still till we saw the Roundhead rascals coming up at a walk, with a sort of animal at their head more like a chandler than a soldier, and beside him, Dry, of Longsoaken, on his gray mare. When they got out clear upon the meadow, old Dry pointed along towards the bottom, and said something—we could not hear what he said, but it was like as if he told him, if you keep down that way, you'll get up to the house without being seen from the windows. The major spoke never a word. Indeed, he spoke very little all the time, but let them go on till—"

"Was Dry still with them?" asked his master, interrupting his discourse.

"Lord bless your lordship, no," answered the servant; "he left them as soon as he had pointed out the way, and trotted back. But when they were half across the meadows, about half a gun-shot from the alders, a trumpeter's horse of ours smelt them out, and, like an untrilled beast, thinking his master was somewhat long in sounding the charge, he began and neighed as loud as he could. Thereupon they halted, and began to look about, as if a horse neighing was somewhat wonderful;

and then the major gave the word, and we were out from the alders in a minute, and down upon them. Your lordship has seen a plump of teal rise up from a pond, and whirl away all in a sweep. Well, four fifths of them were round in a minute, and longest legs won the day. About twenty old fellows, with copper noses and steel caps, stood their ground, however, and fired their pistols at us, keeping all together, and showing broadsword. But we took to steel too, and they could not bide it, but broke; and though they fought better than I ever thought to see such crop-eared hounds fight, they were forced to follow their fellows, though not before some seven had tasted green turf, and had as much of it as will serve them till the world's end. Then we wheeled and followed the rest, cutting them off from the town; and though they rode hard, yet more than nine or ten had cause to wish their spurs were better, till at length, after having chased them back to Rushford, the major sent our Captain Barecote, with thirty men, to keep them going, while he halted, and gave me ten to bring here, saying your lordship might need them."

"Then did Dry, of Longsoaken, fly with them?" demanded his lord, "or did he run back to the town?"

"I doubt that he knew of the affair at all, my lord," replied the man; "he was far down the lane before we charged. No trumpet was blown for fear of bringing the militia-men from Bishop's Merton upon us, and the banks would prevent him from seeing or hearing either."

"Then we will strike a blow at him," said Lord Walton.

The servant rubbed his hands and laughed. "That will rejoice the coxles of many a poor man's heart in Bishop's Merton," he cried. "The old sanctified sinner is only hated as much as he is feared. Why, he was the cause of poor old Sergeant Neil being dragged away, and killed with bad usage; and I do believe the boys would stone him on the green if they knew it, for he—the old man—used to gather the lads about him on the green, and tell them stories of the old wars, when Tyrone was a rebel in Ireland, and he fought under Blount, earl of Devon, till their little eyes almost came out of their heads."

"Dry was the cause, did you say?" asked the young nobleman. "I thought the only cause was the words he spoke—that the king, if he were well counselled, would raise his standard at once, march to London, proclaim martial law, and hang the two ring-leaders of the Parliament before the door of the house."

"Ay, my lord, that was the pretence," replied the servant, "though he never said all that; and they pretended, too, that he knew more of what was going on in the North, if he chose to speak. But the real reason was, that the old man, one day last year, when he was stronger than he was afterward, heard the sneaking villain saying things to poor little Arrah that were not comely, and broke his head with his staff. Dry stomached the affront till the time came for his revenge, and then brought the men over from Devizes to take old Neil away; so I am right glad your lordship is going to punish him on that account."

"'Tis not on that account, Roger Hartup,"

replied his master, gravely, "for of that I know nothing; but, first, the man is a rank traitor, as there is proof enough: and, secondly, I am convinced that this fire last night was not kindled without help. There were men seen about the place just after dark. Dry was up here upon a false pretence in the morning; no one was near the west-tower with a light. Bring me the paper and ink, and call the lance-prisade of the troop who came with the men."

He wrote a few hasty lines while the servant was gone, and on his return with a stout, broad-set soldier, the young nobleman said, "Now, sir, do you think that Major Langan will object to your executing a warrant, under my hand, for the arrest of a rank traitor in this neighbourhood?"

"I was ordered to receive your commands, my lord, and obey them," replied the soldier. "But the major told me to beg your lordship to let him know early what you intended to do, for that he did not hold it safe to remain here much after noon, for fear of being cut off."

"I will send to him directly," replied Lord Walton; "but you, in the mean time, take this warrant, and go round by the back of the town to a place called Longsoaken, where you will apprehend one Ezekiel Dry. Bring him hither without giving him time to speak with any one in private."

"But if he resists?" asked the man.

"Use force," answered Lord Walton; and then added, "but there will be no resistance. Take all your men with you but those who are guarding the committee-men, and five of my people beside. You, Roger, go with him, with Hugh, and three others. Leave Langan for I shall want him; and now," he continued, as soon as they had retired, "to examine into the business of this fire."

Thus saying, he rose, took his hat which lay by him, and, passing through the neighbouring hall, went out upon the terrace; then circling round the ruins of the tower which had fallen, he made his way to the end, where, black and still reeking, stood the part of the building in which the fire had commenced. No one was near, and Lord Walton stood and gazed at it for several minutes with sad and solemn feelings. It looked to him like the corpse of one untimely slain: all was gray and desolate, where lately had been life and cheerfulness. The room in which he used to sit was gone, and all that marked the spot where he had passed many an hour of calm and pleasant contemplation was the charred ends of the rafters and one stout beam, which, not quite destroyed, hung black and crumbling from side to side, bending down half broken in the midst. Part of the wall had fallen in, and part still stood, rugged and ruined; while in the chamber below, some tattered fragments of rich damask furniture and old tapestry hung fluttering in the wind. The smoke still rose up from the pile of rubbish beneath; but on one of the chimneys a bird had already ventured to perch, as if claiming it thenceforth for the inheritance of the wild things of the earth. After a few minutes' sad contemplation, the young lord turned and looked around over the fair scene he was about to leave, perhaps for ever, as it lay in the sunshine of the early morning, calm and smiling, not-

withstanding all the destruction of the preceding night, and the gloomy prospects of the future, with the same peaceful indifference wherewith some have supposed the disembodied spirit to look upon the wild passions and contentions of the world.

As he gazed, however, he saw the figure of a woman seated upon the trunk of a felled beech-tree which lay close beneath the terrace, and instantly perceiving that it was that of Arrah Neal, he beckoned to her to come up to him. The girl did so without hesitation; and as she climbed the stone steps which led from the park, he watched her countenance, to see if the moody and abstracted fit to which she was frequently subject was still upon her or had passed away. There was no trace of it left. Her beautiful eyes were clear and bright, and full of intelligence, though her brow was grave and even sad; and her look was raised towards him with a gentle, imploring, deprecating expression, as if she had in some way offended and sought forgiveness.

"Well, my poor Arrah," said the young nobleman, in a kind tone, "I fear you were much frightened last night."

"I was frightened, my lord," she answered, "but not much; I knew it was for the best, and hoped that it would be soon extinguished."

"All things are for the best," replied Lord Walton. "God forbid that I should doubt it, Arrah. Yet this has been a severe loss and a great grief to me; for I cannot see the house of my fathers so injured without regret. It is not that many invaluable and rare things have been destroyed, but that memories of the past are gone with them. Things, the sight of which recalled the days of boyhood, places stored with a thousand memories, ay, and a thousand associations with times before my own. I can no longer sit in that room, Arrah, and think of those who tenanted it in former years, or of all the many scenes that have there taken place."

"I am very sorry for it, indeed," replied Arrah Neal; "but yet—" and she paused, leaving her sentence unconcluded.

"Tell me, Arrah," continued Lord Walton, not heeding her broken reply, "when you had retired to rest last night, which they tell me was about nine, did you hear any noise in the tower, or any one going up the stairs which pass close behind the room where you slept?"

She gazed at him for a moment in silence, with her large bright eyes fixed, somewhat sadly, upon his countenance, then shook her head, and answered, "No one."

The young lord remarked the peculiarity of her look, and added, "I am sure you would answer truly, Arrah, for your poor grandfather, who gave you an education so much above that which persons far higher in rank bestow upon their children, taught you, I know, always to adhere to truth. Yet hear me, Arrah: I have always tried to be kind to you and yours; I have been fond of you from your childhood. Now I suspect that this fire was not the work of accident. I cannot find that the door at the foot of the tower was closed last night. That enemies were abroad I have too good reason to know; and you, too, warned me yourself that danger was at hand—"

"Oh, but it was not that! it was not that!"

cried Arrah Neil: "the danger I feared for you was not of fire, Charles Walton. Ask me not to tell you, for they made me swear I would not before they would let me go."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the young nobleman, gazing at her thoughtfully. "Well, I will not ask you, then."

"Do not! do not!" she cried, "for I could not refuse you any thing; and that would be wrong after I have sworn: I would lay down my life for you, indeed I would; but you would not wish me to break my word."

"No, no!" replied Lord Walton: "but to return. I suspect, as I have said, that this destruction has not been committed by accident."

"Not entirely," said Arrah Neil, looking down.

"Not entirely!" exclaimed the peer. "Then you know how it happened—you know who did it: Arrah, speak, who was it? That, at least, I may ask."

"The poor girl trembled terribly, but then, in a low, sad voice, she answered, "It was I!"

"You! You!" cried Lord Walton, gazing at her sternly, while his lip quivered in the attempt to suppress the emotion within him. The girl answered nothing, and, after a struggle with himself, he waved his hand, saying: "I forgive you, my poor girl, you did it when you were not yourself. Tell no one else, Arrah—the secret is safe with me;" and he turned away, lest one harsh word should mingle with the kinder ones he had spoken. When he had gone some ten or twelve steps, however, Arrah Neil darted after him, caught his hand, and pressed her beautiful lips upon it.

"Do not abandon me, Charles Walton," she said. "Do not cast me off and hate me. Tell me, would you rather see all those ruins, and lose all you have lost, or be to-morrow a prisoner in the dark Tower of London, perhaps never to ride the green fields again while you live?"

Lord Walton paused with a look of bewildered inquiry; but then suddenly a light rose up in his eyes, and laying his hand upon Arrah Neil's shoulder, he said, "Thank you, Arrah! thank you. 'Tis a wild way of deliverance, yet thank you, dear child. You meant it well, and it has succeeded—but here are people coming. Go back to Annie; we must not leave you behind us."

CHAPTER VII.

THE seasons of the year seemed to take their tone from the spirit of the times and the discord that was raging throughout the land. The summer was gloomy and full of storms: instead of bright sunshine and smiling skies, heavy clouds had been gathering over the heavens from the beginning of the year, and although every now and then a warm and splendid day, such as that which we have described in the beginning of this tale, broke in upon the heavy aspect of the summer, as if to remind man of finer and happier times, yet week after week passed in tempests, rain, and gloom; and signs and portents, such as might have alarmed nations in more superstitious days, were seen in the sky, and filled the hearts of the more timid with apprehension.

It was upon the morning of one of these sad and frowning days that a troop of horse, consisting of about a hundred and fifty men, well armed and mounted, took its way across a wide and somewhat barren plain about forty miles to the northeast of Bishop's Merton, encumbered with a good deal of baggage, and escorting two or three of the heavy carriages of the times, in which were some six or seven women. The prospect was wide and dreary, extending in a number of gray lines, which afford the eye no pleasing object to rest upon, except here and there a little mound or tumulus bearing on its top a clump of black-looking trees; in the distance was a range of low wood, apparently stunted and withered by the chilling blasts which swept over the plain; and a piece of water of some extent was seen glistening on the right, with the sandy road along which the cavalcade took its way winding between the mere and the wood. No hedgerows broke the wide extent, and the ground appeared to be somewhat marshy, for numerous ditches intersected it in every direction, and a large trench ran along on either side of the path, with here and there a small wooden bridge to cross from the highway to the green turf of the plain.

The progress of the party was not very quick; for, as we have said, the carriages were heavy, and their wheels, as well as those of two or three carts and wagons, sunk deep and loose in the shifting soil of the road. By the side of the foremost of the carriages generally rode a Cavalier, with whom the reader is already acquainted under the name of Lord Walton, and ever and anon he laid his hand upon the heavy door, and spoke in at the window to his sister or to Arrah Neil, the latter seldom replying except by a monosyllable or a look. Annie Walton, however, conversed with him gayly and lightly; not that her heart was by any means at ease, or her bosom without its apprehensions; but she was well aware that her brother was grieved for all the inconvenience that she suffered, and for the danger to which she was exposed, and with kindly and generous feelings towards him, she made as little as possible of every annoyance on the march; concealed all the fears that she might experience, and seemed unconscious of the perils of the way. She might not, it is true, deceive her brother as to her own sensations, for he knew her well and understood her kindness and devotion; but still it made the burden lighter to him to hear no murmur and to witness no terror.

From time to time during the march of the two preceding days, some of the rumours which, true and false alike, always ran through a country in a state of agitation, had reached Lord Walton's party, speaking of troops marching hither and thither in the neighbourhood. Now it was a detachment from Lord Essex's army; now it was a body of men crossing the country to re-enforce Waller; now it was a body of militia called out by Parliamentary commissioners from the district or the county through which they were passing. But Lord Walton paid but little attention to these reports, having taken every necessary precaution by throwing out several small parties in front, at the distance of about two or three miles, to guard against surprise, and secure his onward course towards

Cotentry. When any rumour reached him, indeed, which bore more strongly the resemblance of truth than the rest, and was corroborated by his own knowledge of the position and designs of the various persons to whom it referred, he would ride forward to the head of the line, and converse for a few minutes with a thin, bony, grave-looking personage in black, who bore few signs of being a military man, except his large boots of untanned leather, his heavy, steel-mounted sword, and the pistols at his saddle bow. Thus, when they had got about half way across the plain, a horseman galloped up from the right, leaping one or two narrow ditches by which it was intersected, and then, not able to cross the wider trench which separated the road from the turf, riding along by the side of the troop, and making signs to Charles Walton that he had something to communicate; the young nobleman accordingly reined in his horse, and suffering his party to pass on, lingered behind till they were out of earshot.

"Well, Master Hurst," he then asked, "what is your news? I was sorry you would not join us, but I am glad to see you here."

"I told Langan I would follow you, my lord," replied the new-comer; "but I had to put my house in order and sell some hay, for it does not do to go soldiering in these times without money in one's pocket, and I had but short notice. However, my lord, you had better be on your guard; for, as I came over the moor, I found a boy keeping sheep out there between the wood and the water, and wishing to know whereabouts you were, for I could not see you at the time—"

"You did not mention my name, I hope," said Lord Walton.

"Oh no, my lord," answered the horseman;—"I took care not to do that; I only asked if he had seen a body of soldiers, without saying horse or foot. So the boy said, 'Oh yes; that there were five hundred and fifty lying behind the wood'—for he had counted them, seemingly, like a flock of sheep. Then I asked him how many horse there were; to which he replied by saying 'two, and that all the rest had guns, and handliers, and steel caps, except a few who had long pikes in their hands.'"

"This looks serious," replied Lord Walton; "we must look to this intelligence."

"There is more serious work behind, my lord," replied Hurst; "for this news gave me the key of what I saw myself in the morning. These musketeers are not alone. They have got cavalry for their support, my lord, or I am much mistaken: not two hours ago I saw the tail of a troop going into the little village, the spire of which you can just see rising up there. I should have taken them for your men, but that they were coming the contrary road; so I avoided the village for fear of worse."

"Well, Hurst, ride on to the next bridge," said Lord Walton, "and then join me on the road with Major Randal, whom I must consult on our proceedings." Thus saying, he spurred on his horse, and galloped forward to the head of the line, where, pulling up by the side of our spare friend in black, he communicated to him all that he had just heard.

"Ah!" said Randal, in his usual dry and deliberate tone, "ah! Five hundred and fifty

musketeers! rather better than three to one. That would not matter if the ground were fair; but these ditches, these ditches, they are awkward things in the way of cavalry; if our horses could leap them as easily as their shut, the matter would be soon settled. Does any one know what like the ground is there? They will gall us sadly if we have to expose our flank to the wood."

"I fear so, indeed," replied Lord Walton; "but, perhaps, if I were to pass the next bridge, take a circuit round and dislodge them, while you pursue your way along the road, we might contrive to get into better fighting ground."

"Let us see what it is like first," said Randal; "here comes your newsmonger, my lord; we shall learn more from him." Now, Master Yeoman, how does the land lie about the wood? Is there good room for a charge, or is it cut up like this?"

"Between the wood and the road," answered Hurst, "it is just like a gridiron, with ditches enough to drain the sea!"

"And behind the wood—do you know anything of that?" continued Randal.

"It is good enough there," said the horseman, divining the object of his question, "but you cannot get at it for the river."

"They have got some good soldiers among them," said Randal. "Such ground was not chosen by one of the old bottle-nosed serving men of London."

"They must have good intelligence, too," said Lord Walton, "to fix so exactly on a point where they can best attack us. If it were not for my sister and the women, we might take their fire in passing, and get into the good ground beyond. But the carriages and baggage would prove a sad encumbrance."

"Ah, women, women!" cried Randal, "they are the causes of all the mischief in the world. However, we must dispose of them, and must take our resolution quickly; there is no going back now, my lord, and we must make our way forward, at whatever risk: luckily, you have brought all the spare horses, and the women's saddles; they must quit the carriages and mount; the baggage must take its chance, and belong to the winners."

"But I cannot expose my sister," exclaimed Lord Walton, "to such an affair as this: she can go back to the village."

"No, no," said Randal, quickly, "there is no need of that; this good yeoman can guide her around with the rest of the women, while we make our way forward, and do the best we can with these gentry in front. They will not chase her if we keep on our way; but if we quit the road, they will, of course, draw to their left, and cut us off between the causeway and the water. Now, my lord, be quick; get them out and away; I will send a dozen of my men to escort them, with Barecolt at their head. 'Tis the best task for him; for with women he will have room to talk, and that is his occupation. He may lie too, there, as much as he likes, and nobody will find him out. Now, Master Yeoman, you be guide; lead these ladies over the moor, round by the back of that great pond, and into the open ground beyond it. When you get to that mound with the trees on it, you may halt a bit, and watch what we are about on the road. If you

see that we get the worst, put to the spur, and gallop on till you rejoin the Coventry road, then on as fast as may be to the king, who will be in Coventry by noon to-morrow. If you see we make good our ground, come back and join us."

"But there are horse in that village, sir," answered Hurst.

"That can't be helped," replied Randal; "we have no other chance; besides, they may be our people as well as the enemy's.—Stay, it may be as well to see; I will send on Barecolt, while you halt on the hill. He can play either part—swear and swagger like the most licentious Cavalier, or cant and pule like the most starched Puritan."

While this conversation had been taking place, the party had not ceased to advance slowly along the road; but the order to halt was now given, and preparations were made for carrying into execution the plan decided upon. The carriages were stopped, Miss Walton and her attendants placed hastily upon the spare horses which had been brought from Bishop's Merton, and the small body under Captain Barecolt were drawn out and commanded to fall into the rear. Annie Walton did all that she was told to do without a word, but she looked in her brother's face as he placed her on horseback, and, bending down her beautiful head, kissed his cheek, while a silent irrepressible tear rose in her eye.

"Do not fear, Annie, do not fear," said Charles Walton; "we will soon put these fellows to the rout."

But it is in vain, in moments of danger and difficulty, to commend courage to those who by fate or situation are doomed to inactivity, for they must still feel for those that they love, if not for themselves; and though Miss Walton considered for not one moment the personal peril she encountered, her heart beat with apprehensions for her brother, which no words could quiet or remove. Lord Walton then turned to Arrah Neil, who was already mounted, and leaning his hand on the horse's neck, he asked, "Can you manage the horse, my poor Arrah? Had you not better ride behind a trooper?"

"Oh, no," she said, "no; I can ride quite well—I remember now;" and, indeed, the manner in which she held her rein, the ease and grace with which she sat the horse, and the command which she had over it, though a powerful and spirited animal, clearly showed that at some time she must have been well accustomed to such exercise. Lord Walton looked down with a thoughtful expression of countenance, as if there was something that puzzled him. But just at that moment Major Randal rode up, exclaiming, "We must lose no more time, my lord; if we halt any longer here, they may see what we are about, and act accordingly. I shall order the troop to advance, for women are always slow, and they must come after us as they can, till they reach the little bridge yonder. Let the carts and carriages come first, and they can bring up the rear. Now, mark ye! Barecolt, follow this good yeoman, with the ladies under your charge, till you reach that little mound with the trees. You can deliver your stomach by the way of any of the wild imaginations that may fret you; but when you get to the mound you must give up talking, and, riding on to the

village alone, make use of your wit, if you have any left, to ascertain whether there be a troop of horse in it, and of what side."

"Alone!" said Barecolt.

"To be sure," answered Randal, with a laugh; "the man who preached in the morning at Rochelle, and defeated the papists in the evening, who defended the pass in the Cevennes single-handed against a whole army, may well go on alone to reconnoitre a handful of cavalry. Besides, it will make you careful, Master Barecolt, when you know that your own life depends upon your own tongue."

"It has often done that," answered Barecolt.

"I remember, when I was in Spain, being attacked by some twenty banditti, and, putting my back against a rock—"

"March!" cried Randal, interrupting him; "tell that to the girls: 'I will do to pass the time as well as any other lie;' and, riding on, be led the way, while Lord Walton continued by his sister's side, till, reaching the little bridge, the good farmer Hurst turned off from the road into the meadows, followed by the young lady, her servants, and the escort."

With anxious eyes Annie Walton and Arrah Neil watched the advance of the larger party of horse towards the wood before them, although neither of them had heard the exact cause of alarm, or were aware of where the danger was to be apprehended, or what was its nature. All they knew was, that peril lay upon the onward road; and, notwithstanding all the assiduous of Captain Barecolt, who, riding by their side wherever the space admitted it, endeavoured to entertain them with some of the monstrous fictions in which his imagination was accustomed to indulge, they listened not to his tales, they scarcely even heard his words, but with their eyes turned constantly to the road they had just quitted, pursued a path forming with it an acute angle, which led round by the back of a large piece of water, which lay gleaming before them. Once or twice they had to dismount, and lead their horses over the little wooden bridges which crossed the ditches intersecting the plain; and more than once, where these were so insecure as to give way under the horses' feet, they were forced to quit their direct line, and take a circuit round. Nevertheless, as they cantered quickly over the turf between, they had reached the little tree-covered knoll which had been pointed out as their halting-place before the troop which was pursuing the high road had arrived at the spot where the low wood we have mentioned skirted the way. That wood did not, indeed, approach close to the road, but lay at the distance of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards, extending parallel with it for nearly a quarter of a mile, having a green meadow and the continuation of the broad trench we have mentioned between. A river of some width and depth, flowing from the right, crossed the highway under a bridge of two arches, at a short distance from the wood, and at the moment that Miss Walton and her companions reached the mound, the head of her brother's troop was at the distance of some three hundred yards from this bridge.

Knowing well that Major Randal was not a man to be trifled with, Captain Barecolt, as soon as they had arrived at the appointed place, told

ceremonious leave of Miss Walton towards the village, of which a better view than before. The yea, however, were still fixed upon troop, as she sat with her horse in the wood and with her maids Arrah Neil upon her left hand, and y of troopers a little in advance. ained thus for some four or five eathless expectation of what was „ when they perceived the troop sudden halt, and an apparent con- s place at the head of the little that moment Annie Walton heard oopers just before her say aloud, barricaded the bridge, that's clear

d!" she exclaimed, "what will

an, although he heard her words, is head over his shoulder to give thout making any reply.

"a little path, lady," said one of the faced higher up the hill, saw more ground beneath, "there is a little in the side of the bridge into the w; if they were to take that, they of the way of the wood, and I ould cross the river, for it spreads vide it must be shallow."

"not see it," said Annie Walton; see it for the bank." she spoke, a considerable body of t from the wood; and a party of red men, running forward, drew close to the bridge, and opened a try upon the small troop of cavalry ed the road. Several horses at the ne were seen to plunge violently, ith its rider; the next instant the motion, and a charge was made dge; and for a few moments all i and array, in which they could the Cavaliers had recourse to their were endeavouring apparently to ricade.

ath, the path!" cried Annie Wal- y man will ride and tell them of that they can ford the river below, n a hundred crowns."

troopers was instantly dashing for- man who had been left in com- him back, saying that they had to remain there, and must obey. the charge had been repulsed, and were retreating under a heavy fire ay. They formed again, however, agons and carriages.

on remonstrated against the recall iger; but, without waiting to hear rah Neil exclaimed, "I will go, ill go;" and, shaking her rein, she to its speed, and darted forward e could stop her.

oo," cried Annie Walton. "Why sk her life, and a sister fear;" and, she struck her horse with the whip In a moment, without uttering a us yeoman Hurst was by her side, it outsped them both, and rode di- ath she had observed. Without pause, the devoted girl rode on,

although, as soon as ever she was perceived from the bridge, the shots began to drop around her, for her object was instantly divined, and no consideration for her sex restrained the soldiery.

"This way, lady, this way," cried Hurst, turning to the left; "we can speak to them over the dike, and we shall be farther from the fire." They were now within a few hundred yards of Lord Walton's party, and he was seen at the head of the troop gesticulating vehemently to his sister to keep back.

"Ride away, my dear, ride away," cried Hurst; "I will go on;" but at that moment a shot struck his charger, and horse and rider went down together. Miss Walton, however, rode forward, seeing the good yeoman struggling up; and Arrah Neil too pursued her way, reached the bridge, dashed up the path, entered the road, and, in the midst of all the fire, galloped on, till, when within ten yards of the carriages, a ball struck the animal in the haunches, and he reared violently with the pain. She still kept her seat, however, till Lord Walton, spurring forward, seized the bridle and caught her in his arms just as the horse fell, and, struggling in the agonies of death, rolled over into the dike.

"Good God, what is it!" exclaimed Charles Walton, bearing her back behind the wagons. "Annie, Annie, ride away," he shouted to his sister; "if you love me, ride away."

"There is a path down by the bridge—the river is fordable below," exclaimed Arrah Neil; "there are no dikes beyond the stream. All is clear on that side."

"Look, look, Charles," cried Miss Walton, pointing with her hand, "there is a body of cavalry drawing out from the village, and some one riding at full speed towards our people on the hill."

"Friends, on my life!" cried Major Randal. "Now, fair aide-de-camp, gallop round there to the right and keep out of fire. Tell your people to charge the Roundheads in the front, while those from the village take them on the flank, and we do the best we can on the right. What was that you said, pretty maid?" he continued, addressing Arrah Neil: "a path down by the bridge! the stream fordable!"

"Ride away, Annie, ride away," cried Lord Walton; "more to the right, more to the right."

"We must push forward the carriages and carts," said Major Randal; "they will give us some shelter. Where this girl came up, there can we go down."

"I saw the path quite clear," said one of the men.

But, without more words, the new plan proposed was immediately followed; the carts, drawn up two abreast, were pushed forward towards the bridge by the main strength of the dismounted troopers, for the horses had become unmanageable, and the traces had been cut; and under shelter of these and of the carriages, which formed a line on the left, the troop advanced in good order to the bridge, notwithstanding all the efforts of the musketeers.

In the meanwhile, Annie Walton took her way back towards the hill, beckoning to the yeoman Hurst, who had by this time freed himself from his horse; but he, with that sort of passive bravery which is so characteristic of

the English peasant, continued deliberately to unbuckle the girths of his saddle (about which it appeared afterward all his stock was stowed away in various bags and contrivances), and made not the slightest effort to get out of musket shot till he had got the whole upon his back, after which he trudged away towards the hill, only injured by one ball which grazed his arm.

Losing no time by the way, Miss Walton soon rejoined the party of troopers at the knoll, and was giving them the order of Major Randal, when Barcott himself came up at full speed, exclaiming.

"Great news, great news! There is the Earl of Beverley, with two hundred horse, ready to charge the Roundheads in the flank."

"We have Major Randal's orders to charge them in front," said the sergeant.

"Stay, stay," cried Barcott; "wait a minute, wait a minute, and then the man who does not kill his five of the enemy should never sit down with a gentleman to dinner again. Steady, my men, steady; look to your pistols, have ready your spurs. As soon as the earl has crossed the road, I give the word."

"See, see," cried Annie Walton, "they have got down into the meadow—they are fording the stream—see what a fire the enemy are keeping up upon them. Oh, charge, charge, for God's sake, and help them!"

"Madam, I always obey a lady," said Barcott, with a low bow, at the same time raising the blade of his sword to his lips and kissing it. "She is the best commanding officer in the world. Now! Upon them—charge and at them!" and with these words he led his little troop forward, with an air of gallantry and determination which went far to justify the gasconades in which he indulged.

The ford, though somewhat deep, was smooth and easy, but still it exposed the troop of Cavaliers to a terrible fire of musketry from the bridge; and Annie Walton, left alone with her women on the hill, saw with a sinking heart flash after flash run along the road, while the thick white smoke was wafted by the wind over her brother's party, rendering the figures indistinct, and concealing their movements in some degree from her eyes. A moment after, however, she saw two or three horsemen break out of the cloud, and gallop on for several hundred yards into the meadow; then followed a greater number, and she could hear shouts and calls, in the midst of which she thought she distinguished her brother's voice; and then she saw the troopers halt, and form again in line, while Barcott, with his little party, bore steadily on at a quick pace somewhat to the right; and a much larger body of cavalry, which seemed to have taken a circuit from the village behind some hedgerows that skirted the edge of the plain, appeared advancing rapidly on the left of the musketeers, and occupying the whole space between the wood and the high road.

There was now a momentary pause, the firing ceased, the troop of Lord Walton and Major Randal remained still, the smoke cleared in some degree away, and Anne asked herself, "what next?"

The moment, however, that Barcott came upon a line with the rest, the shrill blast of a trumpet was heard from the two larger bodies

of horse; all were again in movement galloping forward towards the point; by the musketeers, the three parties ofists charged headlong down upon them once more the bright flash of the fire along the line of the road, and the smoke again rolled over the combatants.

It was no longer to be repulsed the Cavaliers now charged. For full ten the eyes of the watchers on the hill received nothing but one struggling and mass in the midst of the dim white cloud the frequent flashes of the guns, and then a party of two or three becoming apparent, and then plunging again into the of the melee. At the same time, the reports of the musketry and the long blasts of the trumpet, mingled with shrill cries, were borne by the wind to the earing that the fight was continued with ate determination on each side; and Walton could restrain her anxiety no but moved slowly forward towards th of combat.

Before she had advanced many yards, without a rider rushed across the road, loped over the meadows towards her; turned round, and with elevated head panted nostrils, gazed towards the place which he came; then, with a wild neigh away again, and rushed across the place another instant, three or four men on muskets in their hands, were seen run full speed, and Miss Walton checked her fearing that they might come near but they made direct for one of the ditches mentioned, and, jumping in, seemed to down for concealment.

"They have won the day," cried Anne; and, turning to her women, who looked somewhat slowly, she repeated, "Cavaliers have won the day—God grant he without great loss;" and, at the thought what might be her brother's fate in the fight, her heart sunk with that dread which all feel when the veil which always hangs over the future is brought near eyes, so as to render our contemplation the present dim and indistinct.

A larger party of foot, consisting of twenty or thirty men, was then seen along the road; but close upon them body of cavalry, and in a moment the dispersed and flying over the plain. At the same time, the heavy mass of the infantry which had so long remained together near the bridge, seemed to expel a shell, parties of foot or horsemen scattered here and there in every direction; and a scene of a rout and pursuit took place—the musketeers, in general, cast their arms and flying, while the Cavaliers followed them here and there over the plain, put them to the sword on the least opportunity. In the midst of all this confusion, a group of some twenty horsemen were seen gathered round a spot upon the highest part of the road; the bridge; and after a brief pause, during they remained perfectly still and motionless, a loud and peculiar trumpet call—known to the soldiers as the recall to the standard—was

musical, upon the air; and the next instant five horsemen separated themselves in the party, and rode up at an easy canter towards the wooded knoll.

Annie Walton gazed eagerly, and recognising her brother's form after one moment, of brief delay, rode on to meet him with her heart beating. Lord Walton pushed forward his horse to the rest, and wheeling it by her side, seized her hand in his, murmuring, "My dear Annie, my sweet sister, you have been saddened, I fear, but yet you have showed yourself a soldier's child."

"Oh, Charles, Charles, you are wounded," said Annie, looking in his face, which was bleeding, and at a gory scarf which was round his left leg.

"Nothing, nothing," replied her brother. "I will have scratches when they fight with wild beasts. Annie—and these Roundheads have won themselves as fierce and intractable as they fought gallantly, however, it must be needed, and have made us pay dearly for our success."

"I fear so, indeed, Charles," cried Miss Walton. "I am sure it must be so. But poor Arrah Neil—is she safe?"

"Oh yes, thank God," replied Lord Walton. "I sent just now to the coach in which I had ordered her, to make sure she was uninjured. I do not blame her rashness, my Annie, nor mine either, for it has been the means of saving us; but it was a terrible risk, my dear girl, and your escape is a miracle."

"And good Major Randal?" asked Annie, longing to change the subject.

"He is safe too," replied Lord Walton, "and without a scratch, though never man exposed himself more. But here comes another friend whom you will be glad to see, and to whom we owe all our success."

"Oh, Sir Francis Clare," exclaimed Miss Walton, with a glow of pleasure rising in her cheeks, "I am most happy to see you."

"Nay, not Sir Francis Clare either," cried her brother, "but my oldest and truest friend, Earl of Beverley."

"Nay," said Annie, with a smile, "this is fair of you, my lord, to give me a false name another day. I half intend to punish you by treating you as a stranger still. Had you told me it was Lord Beverley, I should not have said that I never heard my brother mention it, for I can assure you, in former days his ears were full of no one else. However, it is in my hand; I forgive you, trusting with a woman's foolish confidence that you had no good reason for cheating me."

"I will never cheat you more, dear lady," replied Lord Beverley, taking her hand and kissing it to his lips; "but in such times as these, it is sometimes needful to seem not what we are, and these *noms de guerre*, when once assumed, should be kept up to every one. I have ridden near two hundred miles across a barbarous country, where the name of Francis Walton might have found me a hanging from the Tower. Walton said it was a rash act never to risk such an expedition at all, but I have just heard from him that I am not the rash person where there is a good cause, and I am not about to be guiled."

"Nay, will you scold me too?" rejoined Miss Walton, laughing; "if so, I will hold no farther conversation with you. Yet, my good lord, to say truth, I take less blame to myself for what I did, than for not doing it at once. To see the poor girl, Arrah Neil, willing to risk her life to serve my brother, shamed me to think that she should encounter danger alone."

"But you might have sent one of the men, dear Annie," said Lord Walton: "it was a soldier's, not a lady's task to carry such intelligence."

"But they could not go," replied Annie Walton; and as they rode back towards the high road, she explained to her brother and his friend the circumstances under which she had acted.

For a minute or two the conversation was as gay and cheerful as a great success just obtained, a great deliverance just achieved, could render it. Lord Beverley explained to his fair companion, that, having learned that morning, on entering the neighbouring village with a body of two hundred horse, which he had raised for the service of the king, that a regiment of Parliamentary musketeers were lying concealed at the back of the wood, and supposing that their ambush was directed against himself, he had determined to remain in the place, and defend it, should need be, against them; but that, when he found the passage of Lord Walton's troop was opposed, and his friend in danger, he had instantly called his men to the saddle, and advanced to support him. Lord Walton, too, related many of those actions which in such scenes of strife are always crowded into the space of a few minutes; and much praise did he bestow upon the gallant determination of Major Randal and his troop, and also upon the steadiness and courage displayed by his own tenantry and adherents. Captain Darcoll himself had his full share of commendation.

"I had thought," said Charles Walton, "from his ridiculous bravadoes during the last two days, that the man must be at least a coward, although Randal is not one to suffer such an animal near him; but it proved quite the contrary; and I saw his long body constantly in the thick of the mêlée, and his heavy sword cutting right and left at the steel caps of the musketeers, over the very muzzles of their guns."

As they approached nearer to the scene of conflict, however, the sights which Miss Walton witnessed—the dead, the dying, the wounded, the road stained with deep pools of blood, and the sounds that met her ear—the groan of anguish, the sad complaint, the cry for water and for help—blotted out all memory of their success; and with a shuddering frame and a sad heart she followed her brother to the spot where Major Randal was sitting by his cornet, on the parapet of the bridge, receiving accounts from the different troops as they came in of the prisoners taken from the enemy, and the killed and wounded on their own part, while ever and anon a mounted trumpeter by his side blew a loud, long blast, to call the parties from the pursuit.

"Ah, Miss Walton," cried the old officer, starting up and addressing her in his usual bluff tone, "I am glad to see you safe and well. I will never say that women are of no use any more;

for, by my faith, you and that other girl got us out of a pretty predicament. I was blind enough or stupid enough, and so were all the rest, not to mark the little path, for we passed it in charging up to the bridge, and if we had, we should not have known that the stream was fordable below. However, get you into the carriage again, and shut your eyes or draw the curtains, for I see you look white and sickish, and these sights are not fit for women. The men will have soon pulled down that barricade, and then you can go on, while we get up the wounded and follow. We must do ten miles more to-night."

"I should prefer to ride," replied Miss Walton; "you had better put the wounded people in the carriages."

"True, true—well bethought," answered the old soldier. "You are a good girl, after all."

Lord Walton smiled at the somewhat ambiguous compliment to his sister; but, as no time was to be lost, he left her under the care of Lord Beverley, and proceeded to give orders and make those arrangements which the circumstances required. The barricade, which had been constructed hastily of felled trees, stone, and turf, was speedily removed, and the foremost of the carriages was being brought forward to receive some of the severely wounded, who were lying about within the very narrow circle to which the strife had been confined, when Lord Walton's servant, Langan, rode up, exclaiming, "My lord, my lord, the prisoners have made their escape."

"What prisoners?" demanded Lord Walton, forgetting those he had brought from Bishop's Merton.

"Why, that Roundhead rascal and canting hypocrite, Dry, of Longoaken, with Thistleton, and the rest."

"No," rejoined Roger Hartup, who was standing near, with a severe wound in his shoulder, "I shot Thistleton through the head after the first charge. He had picked up a sword, I don't know how, and got out of the carriage, and was just making a plunge at Jackson, the forester, when I blew his brains out with my pistol; you will find him lying behind the wagons. Of the rest I know nothing."

"They are all gone," answered Langan.

"And Arrah Neil?" exclaimed Lord Walton, advancing towards the carriages. But Arrah Neil was not there.

CHAPTER VIII.

INQUIRIES were made on every side, but in vain. No one had seen the poor girl since she had been placed in the coach by Lord Walton; and, indeed, in the haste and confusion of the strife which had ensued after the troop had forded the river and attacked the enemy in front, no one had had an opportunity of witnessing what had taken place among the carriages, except two wounded men who had been left behind upon the road, one of whom had died before the struggle was over, and the other had crept for security under one of the wagons, which had everything that was passing from his sight. The agitation and alarm of Miss Walton

and her brother seemed somewhat beyond measure in the eyes of good Major Randal, who was anxious to hasten forward with all speed. He waited somewhat impatiently while parties were sent here and there over the plain to see for the poor girl who had disappeared, but length he broke forth in a sharp tone, exclaiming, "We cannot wait here till night, my lord, looking for this lost sheep: we have got all the wounded men into the coaches and on the wagons, and, on my life, we must be marching; we have prisoners enough to embarrass us sadly if we should be attacked, and who can tell that we may not meet with another party of these worthies."

"I think not," said the Earl of Beverley, who had shown a good deal of interest in the event which seemed to move his friend so much. "I have heard of no other Roundheads than those in this neighbourhood; but if you will march on, Walton, and take one half of my troop with you, I will remain behind with the rest, for they are fresher than your men, and we can overtake you after we have done all that is possible to discover this poor girl."

"No," answered Lord Walton, "I will leave her behind, Francis, as long as there is a chance. You had better march on, major; I will stay with my own people, and follow you to Henley. Annie, you had better go on: you staying, my dear sister, would but embarrass me. Lord Beverley will give you the advantage of his escort, and I will overtake you before night."

It was accordingly arranged as he proposed; and, to say the truth, Lord Beverley was by no means displeased with the task of protecting his friend's sister on the way. In the course of a quarter of an hour the whole troop was put in motion; and Annie Walton, though somewhat unwilling to leave her brother behind, followed on horseback, with the earl by her side and some fourteen or fifteen horses bringing up the rear at a short distance behind. She was sad and desponding with all the events which had taken place; for the first joy of success and deliverance had by this time passed away, and the impression that remained was of the dark and gloomy character, which her first entrance upon scenes of strife, bloodshed, and danger might naturally produce upon a gentle and kindly heart, however firm might be the mind, however strong the resolution. Her companion well understood the feelings of a girl nurtured with tenderness and luxury, accustomed alone to deal with the peaceful and the graceful things of life, when suddenly forced to witness and take part in the fierce and turbulent acts of civil war, to follow marching men and be a spectator of battle and slaughter. She knew right well that no gay and lively subject would be pleasant to her ear at such a moment, though the soldier himself might habitually shut off all memory of the strife the instant it was over, and give way to joy and triumph in the hour of success. The Cavalier shaped his conversation accordingly, and in a grave though not sad tone, spoke of deeper and more solemn things than had formed the matter of their discourse when last they met. Nevertheless seeking to win her from her gloom, they came from time to time, across the course of all the

said, flashes of bright and brilliant eloquence, rich and imaginative illustrations, sparkling and almost gay allusions to other things, and times, and scenes, which, without producing the discord which any thing like merriment would have occasioned to her ear, stole her thoughts away from sadder subjects of contemplation, and, calling the blessed power of fancy to her aid, enabled her to bear up under the first weight of the dark present. To Annie Walton there was an extraordinary charm in the conversation of the Cavalier: it was like the current of a stream flowing on between deep and shady banks, profound, yet rapid and various, while ever and anon the sunshine broke upon it through the trees, and lighted it up for a space in all the sparkling lustre of the day. At first her replies were brief and few, but gradually she took a greater part in the discourse, answered at large, gave him her own thoughts in return for his, inquired as well as listened, and was won often to a smile. Thus they rode on for about two hours, the Cavalier gaining more and more upon her, and, to speak the truth, the high qualities of her heart and mind winning from him as much admiration as her beauty and her grace commanded at the first sight.

Their progress, as before, was very slow, and once they had to pause for about a quarter of an hour, while the baggage of Lord Beverley's troop was brought forth from the village where he had left it, and added to that of the other party. At length, however, they came in sight of a small town lying on the slope of a hill, with higher up upon the right a detached house, and some tall trees about it, standing in the midst of a park or very large meadow, surrounded by ancient brick walls.

At this point of their march Major Randal rode back and spoke a few words to the earl, who replied, "Exactly as you like, major—I am under your command."

"Nay, my lord," replied the old officer, "I am under yours; you hold a higher commission."

"But with less experience, my good friend," answered the Cavalier; "at all events, Major Randal, I will act by your advice: if you think we can reach Henley, well; if not, we will halt here."

"We might if it were not for this lumbering baggage," answered the old soldier. "I cannot think what has made Lord Walton, who knows well what service is, cumber us with such stuff as this. A trooper should never have any baggage but his arms, a dozen crowns, and a clean shirt."

"You must not grumble, my good friend," replied the earl, dropping his voice. "If I understand Charles Walton rightly, there is that in those wagons which will be more serviceable to the king than all our broadswords."

"Ah! ah! I understand," said Major Randal. "If that be so, we must take care of it, otherwise I think I should be inclined to pitch the whole into the first river. Well, then, my lord, we will stop here; and as that is your house, I believe, you may sleep in your own sheets for one night. We will quarter the men in the village, and I will send out to see that the road is clear for our march to-morrow."

"I shall expect you to supper, however, major," said the earl; "although I cannot tell

whether there is any meat in the house, yet I know there is good old wine in the cellar, unless the Roundheads have got into it since I was there."

"If they have, you will not find a bottle," replied Randal; "for, notwithstanding all their hypocrisy, they drink as deep as Cavaliers: the only difference is, that they cant where the others swagger. But as for your wine, my lord, you must drink it yourself for me. I am an old campaigner, and my saloon is the parlour of the alehouse; I am more at home there than among gilt chairs and sideboards of plate."

"Good faith, you will find little of that in my house," replied the earl; "so come if you will; but, in the mean time, I will guide this fair lady up, and take some of the men with me to guard the house; for there is but a young girl and an old butler of seventy, who recollects Queen Elizabeth, left to take care of it. All the rest of my people are in the saddle."

"That's where they should be, my lord," replied Randal. "I will make your corner quarter the men, as the place is yours, and will see you before I sleep, to plan our arrangements for to-morrow."

Thus saying, he rode on again, and after having given a few orders to his officers for the disposal of the force in the village, the guarding of the house, and the sending back of a small detachment to meet Lord Walton, the Earl of Beverley rode up with his fair companion and her women, by a narrow, wood-covered lane, to the house upon the hill. The building was not very large, being one of the old fortified houses which were common in England in that time, and many of which, during the civil wars, stood regular sieges by the Parliamentary forces. Strong towers and buttresses, heavy walls, narrow windows, and one or two irregular out-works, gave it a peculiar character, which is only to be met with now in some of the old mansions which have come down to these times, falling rapidly into decay, and generally applied to viler uses. As was then customary, and as was the case at Bishop's Merton, a wide terrace spread before the house, upon which the earl and his companions drew in their horses; and, before she dismounted, Miss Walton turned to gaze over the view, while the Cavalier sprang to the ground, and, casting his rein to one of the troopers who had followed him, approached to aid her.

"The prospect is not so wide as at Bishop's Merton, fair lady," said he; "but there is one object in it which will be as pleasant to your eye as any you could see at ruins. There comes your brother."

"I see a party of horse," said Annie Walton, "by the wood under the hill, but I cannot distinguish any of the figures."

"Oh, it is he, it is he!" cried her companion; "but I see no woman among them."

"Alas!" said Annie Walton, "what can have become of that poor girl?"

"It is strange, indeed," said the Cavalier; "but yet, Miss Walton, she may have been alarmed, and fled while the fight was going on. If any injury had happened to her, had she been wounded or killed by a chance shot, she must have been found by this time."

"Oh, no; fear had nothing to do with it," re-

plied Miss Walton; "she went through the midst of the fire to tell my brother of the path."

"Why, he said it was yourself," rejoined Lord Beverly.

"We both went," replied Annie Walton; "but she seemed to have no fear, and I confess my heart beat like a very coward's."

"It is indeed strange," said the earl; "but yet, perhaps your brother may have tidings. Let me assist you to alight;" and, lifting her gently from the horse, he led her into the wide ancient hall, at the door of which stood the old butler, with his head shaking with age, but a glad look upon his countenance to see his lord once more returned.

From the hall, which felt chilly and damp, as if the door of the house had seldom been opened to the sunshine and free air, the earl conducted his companion up a flight of stone steps, and through some wide, unfurnished corridors, to a part of the house which presented a more cheerful and habitable appearance, giving a glance from time to time at the countenance of Miss Walton, as if to see what effect the desolate aspect of the place would have upon her. Absorbed in other contemplations, however, she took no notice, and at length the Cavalier called her attention to it himself, saying with a faint and somewhat sad smile,

"You see, Miss Walton, what effect neglect can have. During my long absence from England, everything has fallen into decay—more, indeed, in this house than in my dwelling in the North; but yet I reproach myself for having given way to the very mingled feelings that kept me from residing in my own land and among my own people. It is not, indeed, the ruin and desolation that falls upon one's property which a man ought to mind under such circumstances; but when a wealthy family dwells in the midst of its own tenantry, they build up a better mansion than any that is raised with hands, a nobler home than the lordly castle or the splendid palace: I mean that which is founded in the love and affections of friends and dependants, ornamented with kindly feelings and mutual benefits, obligations, gratitude, and esteem. And this is the house which falls into more horrible decay, during a long absence, than any of these things of brick or stone."

"I fear, indeed, it is so," said Miss Walton, walking on beside him into a large and handsome room, not only well furnished, but presenting some most beautiful pictures of the Italian school hanging upon the walls, while objects of *virtu* and instruments of music lay scattered over numerous tables, many of which were in themselves excessively costly. "But it seems to me, my lord, that in some respects your house and yourself are very much alike, though perhaps it is bold of me to say so; but, now that I know you really are, I feel as much inclined to regard you as an old friend as you did towards me when first we met."

"Thanks, thanks, sweet lady," answered the earl. "Oh! regard me ever so. But if you mean that in my house and in myself there are desolate and ruined corners, you are mistaken. I am not one of those who have either some real and deep grief overshadowing the heart for ever, or one of those who nourish a sentimental sorrow for nothing at all. There

may be things in my own life that I regret. I may have lost dear friends and relations whom I mourn; but as the common course of events runs in this world, my life has been a very happy one, checkered, indeed, only by a great injury inflicted on my family by the king whom now I serve, which made me resolve, like a foolish boy as I then was, never to set my foot in my native land while he remained in power. When I found that he was fallen, dispossessed, and in need, I came back in haste to serve him with that loyalty which I trust will long be the distinction of a British gentleman."

"I did not exactly mean what you think," replied Miss Walton; "I merely wished to remark that you seem sometimes as gay and cheerful as this room in which we now are, sometimes as sad and gloomy as the hall through which we lately passed." She coloured a little as she spoke, from an indefinite consciousness that the woman who remarks so closely the demeanour of a young and handsome man, may be well suspected of taking a deeper interest in him than she wished to believe she did in her companion.

The Cavalier replied at once, however, without remarking the blush.

"It must be so ever, Miss Walton, with those who feel and think. Is it not so with yourself? The spirit that God gives us is made for happiness, full of high aspirations, and bright capabilities of enjoyment; but it is placed in a world of trial and of difficulty, prisoned in a corporeal frame that checks and limits its exertions, chained down by cares and circumstances that burden its free energies. Whenever the load is not felt, whenever the walls of the dungeon are not seen, the captive gladly casts off the remembrance that such things exist, and rejoices in their absence. But ever and anon they present themselves to his eyes, or press upon his limbs, and he mourns under the weight that he cannot wholly cast off. But here comes your brother; and I will only add that you shall see me sad no more, if you will bargain with me that you will be cheerful too."

In a few minutes Lord Walton himself entered the room, but his countenance bespoke no good tidings of her he had been in search of. He had been able, indeed, to gain no information whatever, though he left no effort unmade; and he was evidently deeply mortified and grieved, so that the next two hours passed in sadness upon all parts. While the necessary arrangements were made for lodging the party in the house for the night, some occupation of a less sad character than the loss of poor Arrah Neil was given to the thoughts of Miss Walton by all the little inconveniences and difficulties attendant upon the sudden arrival of a large party in a mansion unprepared for their reception. Though accustomed through life to every sort of comfort, Annie Walton was not one to make much of trifles; and she was amused rather than otherwise at all the small annoyances, and at the dismay and embarrassment of her maids. When she returned from the rooms which had been assigned to her and her female companions, to that which was called in the house the picture-room, she found her brother conversing in the window with a friend, with a bright and cheerful countenance,

which surprised her. The change was explained in a moment, however, by Charles Walton holding out a dirty strip of paper to her, and saying,

"Here is news of our poor Arrah, Annie. She is safe, although I cannot tell where."

Annie took the scrap of paper and read, merely observing as she did so,

"This is not Arrah's hand: she writes beautifully."

The note ran as follows:

"MY LOVER—This is to tell you, as I hear that you have been a running after pretty Arrah Neil all the evening, that she is safe in this place, and as well as may be. I can't come just at present, for reasons; but I will be over with you by cock-crow to-morrow morning, and either bring her, if I can, or take you to her. I subscribe myself, my lord, your obedient servant to command.

"JOHN HUBERT."

"Francis here," said Lord Walton, when his sister had done reading, "has been laughing at me for the reputation which I have acquired of running after pretty Arrah Neil during the whole evening; but I think I may set laughs at defiance regarding her, Annie."

"I think so too," answered Miss Walton, with a smile; "but I wish we knew where she is."

As often happens, however, when, in the midst of many cares and anxieties, one subject of alarm and grief is removed, all the rest are forgotten for the time, the news of poor Arrah's safety restored the cheerfulness of all the party. We draw an anxiety of future happiness from each blessing that befalls us, from each relief that is afforded; and it is not till new difficulties press upon us that apprehension resumes her away.

Cheerfulness, then, returned to the party assembled in Lord Beverley's house; they sat down to the pleasant evening meal, which closed a day of strife and danger, with hearts lightened and expectations raised; the merry voices of the troopers who were supping in the hall below, gave them warning how best to treat the cares of the time; and if an anxiety or thought of the future did break in for a moment upon them, it was but to teach them to enjoy the present hour, inasmuch as no forethought or grave contemplation could affect the coming events. Lord Beverley exerted himself, without any apparent effort, to keep the conversation in its cheerful tone; and when Miss Walton made some inquiries as to any danger or difficulty which might lie upon the march of the following day, he exclaimed gayly,

"Away with such thoughts, fair lady: we have taken every precaution; we have done all that we can to guard against evil; we have true hearts, and a good cause; and, in trust of God's protection, let us enjoy these hours of tranquillity. They are treasures, believe me, that are not often met with: let us gather them while we can. The best of husbandry, depend upon it, is to sift the corn from the chaff, to separate the gold from the dross, in the portion of time that is allotted to us, and not to mingle the sorrow of to-morrow with the enjoyment

of to-day. Come, Miss Walton," he added, "you must add to our present happiness by letting us hear once more that sweet voice in song, such as delighted me at Bishop's Merton."

"Nay, not to-night," said Annie Walton. "It is your turn now, my lord. By all these instruments of music, I am sure you sing yourself. Is it not so, Charles?"

"Beautifully," replied Lord Walton; "and, what is better than all, Annie, he requires no pressing."

"I will, with all my heart," replied the Cavalier, "but upon one condition; that I am called no more my lord. Charles Walton and Francis Beverley have been too long brothers for the sister of either to use so cold a term. What shall I sing? It must be of love in a lady's presence, otherwise were I no true knight;" and, taking a large Venetian mandolin from the table behind him, he put it in tune, and sang—

LORD BEVERLEY'S SONG.

"Light of my life, my heart's intense desire,
Soul of my soul, thou blossom and thou beam;
Thou kindest day with more than summer's fire,
Thou brightest night like some celestial dream.

"The sight of thee gives sunshine to my way,
Thy music breath brings rapture to my ear;
My thoughts thy thoughts, like willing slaves, obey
Oh thou most beautiful, oh thou most dear!

"One look of thine is worth a monarch's throne,
One smile from thee would raise the dying dead,
One tear of thine would melt a heart of stone,
One kiss, one kiss would vivify the dead.

"Near thee the hours like moments fleet away;

Absent, they linger heavy on the view:

In life, in death, oh let me with thee stay.

Oh thou most beautiful, most good, most true."

The voice was rich and mellow, with all the cultivation which the art of Italy could at that time bestow. There was no effort, there was nothing forced; every note seemed as much a part of the expression of the thought as the words in which it was clothed. But there was a fire, a warmth, an enthusiasm in the singer which gave full depth and power to the whole. It was impossible to see him and to hear him without forgetting that he was singing a song composed probably long before, and without believing that he was giving voice, in the only way his feelings would permit, to the sensations of the moment.

Annie Walton knew not why, but her heart beat quickly as she sat and listened, the long black eyelashes of her beautiful eyes remained sunk towards the ground, and her fair cheek became pale as marble. She would fain have looked up when the song was done, she would fain have thanked the Cavalier and expressed her admiration of his music, but she could do neither, and remained perfectly silent, while her brother remarked the emotion which she felt, and turned his eyes with a smile from her countenance to that of his friend. But the earl, too, had fallen into thought, and with his hand leaning upon the mandolin, which he had suffered to drop by his knee till it reached the floor, seemed gazing upon the frets, as if the straight lines of ivory contained some matter of serious contemplation. Miss Walton coloured as she marked the silence, and, looking suddenly up, said one or two commonplace words which at once betrayed an effort. They served, however, to renew the conversation again. Another and another song succeeded, and after about an hour

spent in this manner, the party separated and retired to rest, while Annie Walton asked herself, with an agitated breast, What is the meaning of this! The sensations were new to her, and for more than an hour they banished sleep from her pillow.

CHAPTER IX.

We must now change the scene, and without much consideration of the "pathos and bathos delightful to see," must remove the reader from the higher and more refined society of Lord Walton, his sister, and the Earl of Beverley, to the small sanded parlour of the little alehouse in the village. We must also advance in point of time for about three hours, and put the hour-hand of the clock midway between the figures one and two, while the minute hand was quietly passing over the six. All was still in the place; the soldiery were taking their brief repose, except a sentinel who walked up and down, pistol in hand, at each entrance of the village; and the villagers themselves, having recovered from the excitement caused by the arrival of the party, and the drinking and merriment which followed it, had taken possession of such beds as the troopers left them, and were enjoying the sweet but hard-earned slumber of daily labour.

Two living creatures occupied the parlour of the alehouse: a large tabby cat, who, as if afraid that the mice upon which she waged such interminable and strategical war might take advantage of her own slumbers to surprise her, had mounted upon a three-legged stool, and was enjoying her dreams in peace, curled up in a comfortable ball, and Captain Barecote, who, seated in a wooden arm-chair, with his long leg-bones, still in their immemorial boots, stretched one upon the other, kept watch, if such it could be called, with a large jug of ale beside him, from which he took every now and then deep draughts, as he mentally declared, "to keep himself awake."

The effect was not exactly such as he expected, for from time to time he fell into a doze, from which a sort of drowsy consciousness of the proximity of the ale aroused him up every quarter of an hour, to make a new application to the tankard. At length, feeling that these naps were becoming longer, he drew his legs off the chair, muttering,

"This won't do! I shall have that dried herring, Randal, upon me; I must take a pipe and smoke it out."

And thereupon he moved hither and thither in the parlour, looking for the implements necessary in the operation to which he was about to apply himself. These were soon found, and a few whiffs soon enveloped him in a cloud as thick as that in which Homer's Jove was accustomed to enshrine himself on solemn occasions; and in the midst of this, the worthy captain continued ruminating upon the mighty deeds he had done and was to do. He thought over the past, and congratulated himself upon his vast renown, for Captain Barecote was one of those happy men who have a facility of believing their own fictions. He was convinced that, if he could but count them up, he had performed more feats of valour, and slaughtered more

bloody enemies, than Amadis de Gaul, Launcelot of the Lake, the Admiral de Coligni, or the Duke of Alva. It was true, he thought, such events soon passed from the minds of great men, being common occurrences with them, so that he could not remember one half of what he had done, which he only regretted for the sake of society; but he was quite sure that, whenever opportunities served, he should be found superior to any of the great captains of the age, and that merit and time must lead him to the highest distinction. This led him on to futurity, and he made up his mind that the first thing he would do should be, to save the king's life when attacked on every side by fifteen or sixteen horsemen. For this, of course, he would be knighted on the spot, and receive the command of a regiment of horse, with which he proposed to march at once to London, depose the lord-mayor, and proceeding to the Parliament House, dissolve the Parliament, seize the speaker and twelve of the principal members, and hang Sir Harry Vane. This, he thought, would be work enough for one day; but the next morning he would march out with all the Cavaliers he could collect, defeat the Earl of Essex on one side, root Waller on the other, and then, with his prisoners, proceed to head-quarters, where, of course, he would be appointed general-in-chief, and in that capacity would bring the king to London.

What he would do next was a matter of serious consideration, for the war being at an end, Othello's occupation was gone; and as, during all this time, he had made sundry applications to his friend the tankard, his imagination was becoming somewhat heavy on the wing, and in a minute or two after he fell sound asleep, while the pipe dropped unnoticed from his hand, and fractured its collar-bone upon the floor.

He had scarcely been asleep ten minutes, when the door of the room slowly opened, and a round head covered with short curls was thrust in, with part of a burley pair of shoulders. The door was then pushed partly open, and in walked a tall, stout man, in a good brown coat, who, advancing quietly to the side of Captain Deciduous Barecote, laid his hand upon his arm. Now what Captain Barecote was dreaming of at that moment it is impossible for the author of these pages to tell; but his vision would appear to have been pugnacious, for the instant the intruder's grasp touched his left arm, he started up, and, stretching out his right to a pistol which lay between the tankard and himself on the table, snatched it up, leveled it at the head of his visitor, and pulled the trigger.

Luckily for the brains, such as they were, of poor John Hurst, for he was the person who had entered, in the last unsteady potations of the bellicose captain a few drops of ale had been spilt upon the pan of the deadly weapon; and though the flint struck fire, no flash succeeded, much to the astonishment of Barecote and the relief of his companion.

"D—n the man," cried Hurst, reeling back in terror, "what art thou about? Dost thou go to shoot a man without asking with your leave, or by your leave?"

"Never wake a sleeping tiger!" exclaimed Barecote, with a graceful wave of his hand. "You may think yourself profoundly lucky, Master Yeoman, that you have got as much

brains left in that round box of yours as will serve to till your farm, for this hand never yet missed anything within shot of a pistol or reach of a sword. I remember very well once, in the island of Sardinia, a Corsican thinking fit to compare his nose to mine, upon which I told him that the first time we met I would leave him no nose to boast of. He being a wise man, kept ever after out of reach of my hands; but one day, when he thought himself in security upon a high bank, he called out to me, 'Ha! ha! capitane, I have got my nose still!' upon which, drawing out my pistol, I aimed at his face, and though the distance was full a hundred yards, with the first shot I cut off his proboscis at the root, so that it dropped down upon the road, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket."

"It must have been somewhat thin in the stalk," said Hurst; "no good stout English nose, I warrant you. But come, captain, you must take me up to my lord. The sentry passed me on to you, and I want help directly, for there is a nest of Roundheads not five miles from here, who have got that poor little girl in their hands, and are brewing mischief against us to-morrow. Half a dozen men may take them to-night, but we may have hard work of it if we wait till daylight."

Captain Barecolt paused and meditated; a glorious opportunity of buying distinction cheap seemed now before him, and the only difficulty was, how to keep it all in his own hands.

"I cannot disturb the commander," he said, in a solemn tone, after a few minutes' consideration; "that's quite impossible, my friend. Faith, if you want help, you must be content with mine and a half dozen soldiers of my troop. I am a poor creature, it is true," he continued, in a tone of affected modesty, "and not able to do so much service as some men. I never killed above seventeen enemies in a day; and the best thing I have to boast of is having blown up a fort containing three hundred men with my own unassisted hand. However, what poor aid I can give you, you may command. We will take six picked men with us, if that be enough; you and I will make eight, and if there be not more than a hundred and fifty of the enemy, I think we could manage."

"A hundred and fifty!" cried Hurst. "Why, there are but seven, and one of them is not a fighting man."

"Whom may they be?" asked Barecolt, in a solemn tone; "if there be but seven, we shall have no need of any men; I will go alone. Who may they be?"

"Why, there's that Captain Batten, whom my lord took away prisoner, I hear," replied Hurst; "then there's a Doctor Bastwick, a Parliamentary committee man; then there's old Dry, of Longsoaken, who dragged away the girl while you were all fighting at the bridge; the other four are, I hear, common council-men of Coventry, though they are all decked out in buff and bandolier, as if they were fire-eating soldiers just come from the wars. They were laying a plan before they went to bed for bringing troops from Coventry round about my lord and his men, while two regiments of Essex's, that are marching into the North, were to have warning, and cut off the retreat."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Captain Barecolt, "we will cut off theirs. Have you got a horse, Master Yeoman? I think yours was killed in the field!"

"Ay, that it was," answered Hurst, "to my loss and sorrow; as good a beast as was ever crossed, and cost me twenty pound."

"We will mount you, we will mount you," said the captain; "there are a dozen and more good horses which forgot their riders yesterday, and left them lying by the bridge. We may as well have half a dozen men with us, however, just to tie the prisoners, for that is not work for gentlemen; so you sit down and take a glass of ale, and I will get all things ready."

In the course of about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, Captain Barecolt had called to his aid eight men of the troop whom he could most depend upon; and after having brought down Major Randall's cornet to take his post during his absence, and mounted good John Hurst on the horse of a trooper who had been killed the day before, he led the way out of the little town, and, guided by the yeoman across the country, advanced slowly towards another village, situated in the plain about five or six miles from that in which they had taken up their quarters. The country was open, without woods or hedges, but the night was profoundly dark, and the wind sighing in long gusts over the open fields. Nothing was to be seen except the glimmer of a piece of water here and there, till they approached the village to which their steps were bent, when one or two lights became visible among the houses, as if, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, all the inhabitants had not yet retired to rest. One of these lights, too, as if proceeding from a lantern, appeared moving about in the gardens; and Captain Barecolt, turning to Hurst, asked him, in a low voice,

"What is the meaning of those lights?"

"I don't know," answered the yeoman. "It was all dark when I crept away."

"We shall soon see," rejoined Barecolt.

"You are sure there are no troops in the place?"

"There were none when I left it," replied Hurst; but, almost as he spoke, a loud voice exclaimed,

"Stand! Who goes there?"

"A friend," answered Barecolt.

"Stand! and give the word," repeated the voice, and at the same moment a small red spot of fire, as if produced by a man blowing a match, appeared immediately before them; and Barecolt, spurring on his horse, found himself in the presence of a matchlock man, at whose head he aimed a cut with his heavy sword, which rang sharply upon a steel cap, and brought the man upon his knee.

He fired his piece, however, but missed his mark, and threw down the gun, while Barecolt, catching him by the shoulder, put his sword to his throat, exclaiming,

"Yield, or you are a dead man."

The sentinel had no hesitation on the subject, having already received a sharp wound in the head, which left him little inclination to court more.

"Now tell me who is in the village," exclaimed Barecolt, "and see you tell truth, for your life depends upon it."

"Three companies of Colonel Harris's regiment," answered the soldier, "and a troop of Lord Essex's own horse."

"The number!" demanded Barecolt.

"Four hundred foot, and a hundred troopers," replied the man; and, having a little recovered from his first apprehension, he demanded, "Whom may you be?"

"My name is Johnson," answered Barecolt, readily, "first captain of Sir Nicholas Jarvis's regiment of horse, marching up to join the Earl of Beverley and Lord Walton, at Hendon, near Coventry. We thought they were quartered in this village: whereabouts do they lie?"

"Oh, no," answered the man, "they are five miles to the east, we hear, and we were to attack them on the march to-morrow."

"Are you telling me the truth?" said Barecolt, in a stern tone; "but I will make sure of that, for I will take you with me to Sir Nicholas Jarvis, and if we find you have cheated us as to where they lie, you shall be shot to-morrow at daybreak. Tie his hands, some of you—hark! there is a drum! There, curse him, let him go; we have no time to spare; I must get back to Sir Nicholas, and let him know that we are on the wrong road."

Thus saying, he turned his horse and rode away, followed by the rest of his party, while the tramp of men coming down fast from the village was heard behind them.

The reader need not be told that Captain Barecolt never had the slightest intention of carrying off the wounded sentinel with him; for, having filled him with false intelligence regarding the march of his imaginary regiment, he was very glad to leave him behind to communicate it to his fellows in the place. In the mean while, he himself gave orders for putting the horses into a quick trot, and returning with all speed to the village, where, without communicating the tidings he had gained to any one, he left his men, and hurried up with Hurst to the mansion on the hill. The earl and Lord Walton were immediately called up, and Barecolt, being admitted to their presence, made his statement. We are by no means so rash as to assert that the account he gave was altogether true, for Captain Deciduous Barecolt, much more skilful than the writer of this tale, never lost sight of his hero, and his hero was always himself; but, at all events, the intelligence he brought of the enemy was accurate enough, and the stratagem he had used to deceive the foe was also told correctly, and received great commendation.

He was sent down immediately, however, to call Major Randal to the council, and in the mean time, the two young noblemen eagerly questioned Hurst as to what he had seen and heard among the adverse party. His tale was told briefly and simply, and showed the following facts: After his horse had been killed, he had carried off his saddle and the other worldly goods which he possessed; and finding that, without being of any service to his party, he was in imminent danger of losing his own life from the stray shots that were flying about in different directions, he made the best of his way to the back of the little mound we have mentioned, and thence peeped out to see the progress of the fight. Perceiving at one time, as

he imagined, the small force of Royalists waver- ing in their attack upon the musketeers, he judged it expedient, lest his friends should be defeated, to put a greater distance between himself and the enemy; and taking all that was most valuable to him out of the saddle, he left it behind him, and hurried on for about a mile farther, where he took up his position in a ditch. While thus ensconced, he saw the well-known form of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, together with that of another gentleman, whom he afterward found to be Captain Batten. Between these two appeared poor Arrah Neil, of whose arm Dry retained a firm grasp, while he held a pistol in his right hand, under the authority of which he seemed to be hurrying her on irresistibly. In about a quarter of an hour more some fugitive musketeers ran by as fast as they could go, and shortly after, several of Major Randal's troopers appeared in pursuit; but as Hurst was unacquainted with the soldiers, he prudently resolved to lie concealed where he was till some of his lord's followers should come up, which he calculated would be shortly the case, fearing he might be taken for one of the enemy, or, at all events, that he might be plundered by a friend—an operation as common in those days as in the present, though then it was done with pistol and broadsword, and now, in general, with pen and ink.

Towards the end of the day some of Lord Walton's men did appear, and spoke a word to him in passing, from which he gathered they were searching for Arrah Neil, but, with the usual caution of persons sent upon a search, they rode on without waiting for any information he could give. Having marked the road which Dry and his companions had taken, Hurst then determined to follow them, and made his way to the village in which they halted for the night. "His plan had proved successful," he said; "he had found the two Parliamentary committee-men, together with Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, lodged in a house in the village, and boldly seeking out Dry, he gave him to understand that he had been taken by Lord Walton to join the king against his will, and was now making the best of his way home. He affected some fear of being overtaken; and, in order to reassure him, Dry and Dr. Bastwick communicated to him the intelligence they received in the course of the evening from the men of Coventry, in regard to the movement of the Parliamentary forces. This took place some hours subsequent, however, to the dispatch of his note to Lord Walton, and he could not make his escape from the village, in order to carry more accurate tidings to his young landlord, till Dry and the rest had retired to bed."

As soon as Major Randal arrived a hasty consultation was held, to ascertain the course of proceedings which it would be expedient to follow. It was determined immediately to commence the march, and orders were given to that effect, which at once produced all the bustle and confusion of hasty departure. Miss Walton was called up, and, dressing herself hastily, was soon placed upon horseback once more, for it was determined to leave the carriage behind; and in about an hour the two noblemen and their followers, with Major Randal's troop, were marching on, in the gray of the dawn, and di-

recting their steps towards Coventry. A small guard was left over the prisoners, with orders to remain behind about an hour, and then to leave them and follow with all speed, in order that the departure of the troop might be accomplished as secretly as possible. No trumpet was sounded; and if it had been possible to carry out King Lear's plan, and shoe a troop of horse with felt, it would have been done upon the present occasion.

The march, however, was conducted with as much silence as possible; and Miss Walton, riding between her brother and the Earl of Beverley, had plenty of time for thought. The sky had changed from gray to purple and gold; the expanse of the heavens had lost its glorious hues as the sun rose up above the horizon; and the morning of a somewhat dull and heavy day had fully dawned ere any one spoke, except, indeed, when the few short words of command and direction were necessary. The countenance of Lord Walton was grave, and even sad; and his sister, who watched it with some anxiety, at length inquired,

"Do you anticipate any great danger, Charles? You look very gloomy."

"Oh, no, dearest Annie," he answered; "I think we are so far before our enemies, that we shall without doubt be able to join the king before they are aware of our departure. But I cannot think of being obliged to leave that poor girl in the hands of that old hypocrite, Dry, without feeling very sad. If he treat her ill, we be to him should he and I ever meet again; but I trust he will be afraid to endanger his sanctified reputation. That is my only hope."

The earl now joined in with that tone of calm cheerfulness which is the most persuasive of hope, and with the peculiar charms of his conversation, and the continual and brilliant variety which it displayed, led the thoughts of his companions to happier themes, and almost made them believe that brighter days were before them. Since the preceding night his manner had much changed towards Miss Walton: there was a tenderness in it, a softness, a tone which can only be called the tone of love; and though both were more silent than they previously had been, yet each, in that silence, was thinking of the other, and it is very dangerous so to do, unless we are disposed to yield to feelings which in the end may master us altogether. Coquetry may talk, may carry on uninterrupted observation and reply; indifference may pursue the calm and easy current of conversation; and avowed and satisfied love may hold unbroken communion upon all the many subjects of thought and imagination; but in its early day true passion is fitful in its eloquence, full of silence and interruptions, for it is full of thought; and the voice of feeling is often the strongest when the lips are motionless and the tongue is mute.

But we will dwell no more upon such matters, for we have action before us instead of thought, deeds rather than sensations. After a march of about four hours, and a short pause for refreshment, the advanced party of the troop was seen to halt upon a small eminence, while one of the troopers rode back at full speed, bringing the intelligence that they saw a considerable body of men drawn up at a short distance from Coventry.

"Are we so near," said Miss Walton.

"Within three miles," replied the earl. "That is the spire of St. Michael's church rising over the slope. You will see the city as soon as we pass the rise. Think you these are the king's troops, Major Randal?"

"Ay, such troops as they are," answered the old officer; "we must have more and better before we do much service."

"It will be as well to despatch some one to see," said Lord Walton. "I will send two of my servants, major. Here, Langan and Hart-up, ride on with all speed, and bring me back news of the people who are before Coventry. I cannot divine why the king should halt before the gates."

"There may be rogues within," said Major Randal. And so it proved; for, on their arrival at the top of the slope, where Coventry, with its wide walls and beautiful spires, rose fair before them, they saw a fire of musketry opened from the city upon a small party of Royalist troops which approached too near the gates.

Marching rapidly on as soon as it was ascertained that the force they saw was that of Charles himself, they soon reached the monarch's army, if so it could be called, and Annie Walton found herself in the midst of a new and animated scene.

The king's face expressed much grief and vexation, as, sitting upon a powerful horse, he consulted with some of his principal officers as to what was to be done on the rebellious refusal of Coventry to give him admission. But when he turned to receive the little re-enforcement which now joined him, his countenance assumed a glad and cheerful look; and as Lord Walton, dismounting, approached his stirrup, he held out his hand to him graciously, saying,

"Those are kind friends and loyal subjects indeed, my lord, who rally round their sovereign when more favoured men forsake him. Your own presence, my good sir, is the best answer you could give to my letters. We must retreat, I fear, however, from before these inhospitable walls, for we have no cannon to blow open their gates, and even if I had I could wish to spare my subjects."

"Ah! sire," said Major Randal, who had also advanced to the king's side, "when subjects draw the sword against their king, both parties should throw away the scabbard, for it is the blade must decide all."

"Too rough, and yet too true," said Charles; and after a few more words addressed to Lord Beverley and Miss Walton, the king turned his horse and rode off with his attendants towards Stonely, leaving the small force by which he was accompanied to follow.

CHAPTER X.

THREE or four days had elapsed, and the party in whose fate we have interested ourselves had reached the town of Nottingham in safety; but gloom and despondency hung over the court of the king, over the small force at his command, and over the whole city. Proclamation had been made for all loyal subjects to join the monarch in Nottingham; and it had been an-

nounced that on that day, the 25th of August, 1642, Charles would set up his royal standard against his rickishous Parliament. Few persons, however, joined him; not a single regiment of foot had been raised; the body of horse which he had led to Coventry had been little increased since he had retreated from that city; the artillery and ammunition from York had not yet arrived; and sadness was upon every brow, and apprehension in every heart.

The evening was dark and gloomy, the wind rising in sharp and howling gusts, a few large drops of rain were borne upon the blast, and every thing promised a night of tempest, when the king, accompanied by all the noblemen and gentlemen who had joined him, set out on horseback for the hill on which stands the old castle of Nottingham, with the knight marshal before him bearing the royal standard, and a small body of the train bands accompanying it as a guard. On reaching the spot destined for the ceremony, the standard-pole was fixed with great difficulty, amid the roll of the drum and the loud blasts of the trumpet. But neither the war-stirring sound of the drum, nor the inspiring voice of the trumpet, could cheer the hearts of those around, or give them confidence even in the success of a good cause; and with the same sadness with which they had gone thither, the royal party returned from the castle hill just as the evening was growing gray with night.

Some four or five hours after, Lord Walton, who had participated fully in the gloomy feelings which pervaded the whole court, rose from the supper-table, at which he had been seated with his sister, the Earl of Beverley, and one or two friends who had joined them in Nottingham, saying,

"My head aches, dearest Annie; I will walk up to the castle hill, and take a look at the standard. The air may do me good."

"I will go with you, Charles," said Miss Walton, rising. "I will not keep you a minute."

"Nay, not in such a night as this, Annie," answered her brother. "Do you not hear how the wind blows, as if it would force in those rattling casements!"

"Oh, I mind not the wind," replied Annie Walton; "you shall lend me your arm, Charles; it will always be strong enough to steady your sister's steps."

"God grant it, dear one," replied Lord Walton. "Well, come! I do wish to talk with you, Annie, upon many things;" and in a few minutes they were in the streets of Nottingham. The wind was even more strong than they had expected, but the tall houses of the good old town, though exposed by its position to the blasts, gave them some shelter; and as they walked along, Lord Walton, after a few minutes silence, put his right hand upon his sister's, which grasped his arm, and said, "I wish to speak to you of the future, dear one. Danger and strife are before me. It is impossible for you to follow the movements of an army, and therefore I wish, before I march hence, to take you to the house of our good old cousin, Lady Margaret Langley, where you may rest in safety."

"I will go, Charles, if you wish it," replied Miss Walton; "but it must be only upon the

condition that no restraint be put upon my movements, and that, whenever there is a pause in the war, I may be allowed to follow and be near you."

"Of course, dear sister," replied her brother. "I don't pretend to restrain you in any thing, Annie. You are old enough, and wise enough, and good enough to decide entirely upon your own actions. You must keep several of the servants with you, to guard you and protect you wherever you go. You must also have a sufficient sum to put you above any circumstances of difficulty, whatever you may think fit to do."

"Oh! I have the jewels, you know, Charles," said Miss Walton, "and more money of my own with me than will be needful."

"Well, we will see to that hereafter," said Lord Walton; "but there is another subject on which I would speak to you. No one can tell what may be the chance of war. I may go safely through the whole of this sad strife, and see the end of it. I may fall the first shot that is fired; but if I do, Annie, you will need some strong arm and powerful mind to protect and support you. In that case, I would leave you as a legacy, as a trust, as a charge, to the best friend I have on earth, the oldest, the dearest. Francis Beverley loves you, Annie."

"Hush! oh, hush! Charles," cried Miss Walton, and he felt her hand tremble upon his arm.

"Nay, sweet sister," continued her brother, "I asked you for no confessions; your life is told, dear girl. All I ask is, will you, when I am gone, without reserve or woman's vain reluctance, trust in him, rely on him, as you do on me!"

His sister was silent for a moment, and he repeated, "Will you, Annie, forget all coyness, all unkind and ungenerous diffidence, and, recollecting he has been a brother to your brother, confide in him as such!"

Annie Walton paused again for a single instant, and then, with her face bent down, though no one could see her glowing cheek in the darkness, she murmured, "I will."

Lord Walton pressed her hand in his, and then in silence led the way up the hill.

It was with difficulty that they ascended, so fierce were the gusts of wind; but the very violence of the blast scattered from time to time the drifting clouds, and the moon occasionally looked forth and cast a wavering light upon their path. Not a soul, however, did they meet in their way; all was still and silent but the howling of the tempest, till at length, when they reached the top, the voice of a sentinel exclaimed as usual, "Stand! Who goes there!"

"A friend," replied Lord Walton; and, before the man could demand it, he gave the word for the night, saying, "The crown."

"Pass," replied the sentinel; and he walked on with his sister clinging to his arm.

The moon shone out again, and Miss Walton and her brother both gazed forward towards the spot where the standard had stood. They could not see it, and, hurrying on their steps, they found four or five of the trainband standing round the place. The standard itself was lying flat upon the ground.

In answer to Lord Walton's questions, the

men informed him that the wind had blown it down, and that they found it was impossible to raise it again; and, turning sadly away, the young nobleman murmured in a low voice to his sister, "God send this be not an omen of our royal master's fate!"

CHAPTER XI.

In a small tavern at Nottingham was a large but low-roofed room, with the heavy beams, blackened by smoke, almost touching the heads of some of the taller guests, in which, on the night after that of which we have just spoken, were assembled as many persons as it could well contain; and a strange scene of confusion it presented. Hats and feathers, swords and daggers, pipes and glasses, bottles and plates, big men and little, men of war and men of peace, an atmosphere composed of smoke, of the fumes of wine, the smell of strong waters and of beer, and the odour of several large pieces of roast meat, together with innumerable sounds of innumerable kinds, oaths, cries for the tapster and the boy, loud laughter, low murmurs, the hoarse accusation, the fierce rejoinder, the sustained discussion, the prosy tale, and the dull snore, as well as the half drunken song, had all their place in the apartment, which might well have been supposed the tap-room of the tower of Babel. The house was, in short, a place of resort for the lower order of Cavaliers, and the hour that at which the greater part, having supped, were beaking themselves to their drink with the laudable determination, then but too common, of leaving themselves as little wit as possible till the next morning.

"*Basla, basla!* It sufficeth!" cried a tall man with a peculiarly constricted nose. "I will find the good youth, if he were in a hundred Hulls. What's Hull to me, or I to Hull? as the poet says. I know, if I can bring the girl back out of his clutches, where a hundred crowns are to be got. We have open hands among us; but mark me, master! if you are deceiving me I will cut your ears off."

The man whom he addressed was a small, sharp-eyed man, reddish in the hair and pale about the gills; but he answered stoutly,

"That's what you dare not, Master Barecolt."

"Dare not?" cried Barecolt, seizing a knife that lay upon the table, and starting up with an ominous look. "Dare not! What is it that I dare not? Now, look you, repeat that word again and you shall go forth of this room with no more ears than a grinder's cur. Dare not! thou small chandler, I could break you across my knee like a piece of rotten wood."

There was some truth in what he said, and the small man felt the force of that truth, so that he thought it expedient to lower his tone.

"I meant I would take the law of you if you did," he said; "so no more of cutting off ears, Master Barecolt, for we have sharp justices in Nottingham. But what I said is very true. I know old Dry very well—have known him, indeed, these twelve years. When first he used to come to Hull to buy goods of the Hamburgers, I had a shop there, where he used to stop and take a glass of cinnamon now and then. But he has grown a great man now, and would hardly notice an old acquaintance, especially as he was riding with men of war."

"And you are sure he had a woman with him?" asked Barecolt, resuming his seat and filling his glass.

"A sort of girl, mayhap some sixteen years of age," answered his companion. "She looked somewhat rueful, too, with her eyes cast upon the ground as she rode along."

"That's she," replied Barecolt; "'tis beyond all doubt. What does the dried herring at Hull, I wonder—let me see. It would take some threescore men to capture Hull, I doubt!"

"Threescore!" exclaimed the other; "some thirty thousand, you mean."

Barecolt gave him a look of unutterable contempt. "Four petards," he said, continuing his own calculations in an under tone, "for the outer gate, the bridge, the inner gate, and one to spare—ha! threescore men—half must be musketeers—well, there is Hughes's company. I will do it."

"You had better not try," answered his companion. "I could tell you a much better plan, if you would strike a bargain in an honest way, and give me half the reward for finding this young woman, as you say there are great folks looking after her."

"Half the reward, thou little Carthaginian!" exclaimed Barecolt. "By my faith, if you have half the reward you shall have half the danger too; and a quarter of it would turn your liver as white as a hen pigeon's."

"Why, I will save you all danger if you will listen to me," answered the small gentleman. "I will tell you my plan, and you shall judge; and whatever risk there is, I will share readily enough. I know all the houses that Dry frequents in Hull; all his haunts, from the store where he used to buy dried beef and neat's tongues salted, to the shop where he used to take the fourth glass of strong waters. If you will put off your swagger and your feathers, clothe yourself like a Puritan, and walk demurely, we will take two companions, slip into Hull with a couple of horseloads of drapery, find out where Master Dry lodges, and while I busy him with a little speculation in his own way, by which I can easily make him believe that he will fill his pockets, you can deal with the girl and get her out of the city."

"Clothe myself like a Puritan," said Barecolt thoughtfully; "that is the only difficult part of the affair; for, unless I steal old Major Rumbold's suit of black, where I am to get a pious doug?"

"I know not. The fifty crowns Lord Walsingham gave me have been spent on this new bravery and sundry pottle pots, together with things that shall be nameless, friend Tibbetts; but, by my faith, I will go and ask the good lord for more. He will not grudge the pistoles if we can get Mistress Arrah back again to him. He's as fond of her as a hen of her chickens—yet all in honour, Master Tibbetts—all in honour, upon my life—I will go this minute, as soon as I have finished this pint;" and again he filled his glass and drained it at a draught. He then rose from his seat, and was in the act of saying, "Wait here for me, and I will be back in a minute," when an officer was seen dimly through the smoke, entering by the door on the other side of the room. After gazing round for a minute from table to table, he exclaimed aloud, "Is one Captain Barecolt here? He is wanted by the king."

"I knew it!" cried Barecolt, giving a towering look at Master Tibbetts. "I was sure of it—my great services—Sir, my name is Barecolt, and your very humble servant."

The officer gazed at him with a look of some consideration and surprise: "My good friend," he said, "you seem scarcely fit to obey the king's summons; you have been drinking."

"So does his majesty, I wot, when he is thirsty," replied Barecolt, nothing abashed; "but if it be of proportions you speak—if it be quantity makes the difference. I will soon remedy the amount of wine within by the application of water without. I am not drunk, sir—I never was drunk in my life; no, sir, nor was I ever the worse for liquor, as it is termed, though often much the better for it. But, whenever I und my eyes a little misty, and see a fringe round the candles, or feel the floor move in an unusual manner, or the cups dance without any one touching them, I have a secret for remedying such irregularities, which secret lies, like truth, in the bottom of a well. Hold—Tapster, I have drunk wine enough to-night to justify me in calling for water, even in a tavern. Tapster, I say, get me a bucket of cold water from the pump, and put it down before the door; then bring a napkin to take off the superfluous—I remember when I was in the Palatinate, going to see the great tun—"

"Sir, we have no time for tales," said the officer, dryly; "the king waits. Make yourself as sober as you can, and as speedily as possible."

"Sir, I am with you in an instant," rejoined Barecolt. "Master Tibbetts, wait here till I come back. You can finish the tankard for me; it is paid for."

Thus saying, he went forth, and returned in a few minutes, buttoning up his collar, with his scattered hair somewhat dishevelled and dripping; and saying he was ready, he followed the officer, making another sign to Tibbetts to wait for his return.

"Who is that fellow?"

"What the devil can the king want with him?"

"Why, it's Captain Barecolt, of Randal's."

"I think the king might have chosen a better man."

"That's a lie. There is not a better man in the service."

"He's a bragging fool."

"I dare say, a coward too."

"No, no! no coward, for all his brags."

Such were some of the observations which followed Barecolt's departure with the officer, while they wended on their way through the streets of Nottingham to the king's lodging, whither we shall take leave to follow them. The style and semblance of a court was kept up long after the royal authority was gone, and in the first room which Barecolt entered was a number of servants and attendants. Beyond that was a vacant chamber, and then a small anteroom, in which a pale boy, in a page's dress, sat reading by a lamp. He looked up as the captain and his conductor appeared, but did not offer to move till the officer told him to go in, and say to his majesty that Captain Barecolt was in attendance; on which he rose, opened a door opposite and knocked at a second, which appeared within. Voices were heard speaking; and after a moment's pause, the boy repeated the signal, when the door was opened, and he made the announcement.

"Let him wait," was the reply; and for about twenty minutes the worthy captain remained, his head getting each moment cooler, and freer from the fumes of the wine; but his fancy only

became the more active and rampant, and running away with him over the open plain of possibility, without the slightest heed of whither she was carrying her rider. Having already given the reader a sample of her doings with Captain Barecolt in a preceding chapter, we will spare him on the present occasion, especially as it would take much more time to recount her vagaries in the good gentleman's brain than it did for her to enact them.

At length the door opened, and a voice pronounced the words "Captain Barecolt!" at which sound the captain advanced, and entered, not without some trepidation; for there is something in majesty, even when shorn of its beams, that is not to be lighted by common men.

The king was seated at a table in a small room, with lights and papers before him, and three or four gentlemen were standing round, of whom Barecolt knew but one, even by sight. That one was the Earl of Beverley, who, with a packet of letters in his hand, stood a little behind Charles upon the king's right. The monarch wore his hat and plume, and the full light was shining on his fine, melancholy features, which looked more sad rather than more cheerful for a faint smile that was passing over his lip. His fair right hand lay upon the table, with the fingers clasped round a roll of papers, upon which they closed and opened more than once, while Barecolt advanced to the end of the table with a low bow, and the monarch gazed at him attentively for a few moments.

"Your name is Barecolt?" asked the king, at length.

"It is, may it please your majesty," replied the captain.

"You have been much in France, I think?" continued Charles.

"Many years, sire," answered the soldier, "and speak the language as my own."

"Good!" said the king. "With what parts of the country are you most acquainted?"

"With all parts, your majesty," rejoined the captain, who was beginning to recover his loquacity, which had been somewhat checked by the first effect of the king's presence. "I have been in the north, sire, where I fought against Fuentez; and I have travelled all over the ground round Paris. I know every part of Picardy and Isle of France. Normandy, too, I have run through in every direction, and could find my way from Caudabec to Alençon with my eyes blindfolded. Poitou and Main I am thoroughly conversant with; and know all the towns on the Loire and in the Orlannois—the passes of the Cevennes, the Forez, and the Vivarais."

But Charles waved his hand, saying, "Enough, enough! Now tell me, if you were landed on the coast of Normandy—say at Pont au-de-Mer—and had to make your way secretly to Paris, what course would you take?"

"Please your majesty, Pont au-de-Mer is not a seaport," replied Barecolt. The king smiled, and Barecolt continued: "I know it well, and a pretty little town it is, upon the Rille."

"Well, well," said the king; "suppose you were landed at Harfleur, then—I did but wish to try you, sir—how would you direct your course for Paris from Harfleur?"

"If I were to go secretly, may it please your majesty," was the reply, "I do not think I should go near Pont au-de-Mer at all, for then I must pass through Rouen, where they are cut-

and cunning, ask all sorts of questions, and look to pass sharply. No; I would rather take a little round by Lisieux, Evreux, and Pacy, or, perhaps, keep still farther out from the Seine, and come upon Paris by Dreux, Pontchartrain, and Versailles. Then they would never suspect one came from the seaside."

The king slowly nodded his head with a satisfied air, saying, "I see you know what you speak of, my friend. My Lord of Beverley, this will do. If you wish to ask him any more questions before you trust yourself to his guidance, pray do so."

"Oh no, sire," replied the earl; "I satisfied myself by my conversation with Major Randal before I spoke with your majesty upon the subject. He assures me that Captain Barecolt knows France well, and I have had cause to be aware that he is a serviceable companion in moments of danger. There is but one bad habit which I trust Captain Barecolt will lay aside for the time, that is, too much talking. I am going, sir, to Paris, on business of importance. The road that I know is not now open to me, and I have need of one to accompany me who is well acquainted with the country through which I have to pass. By his majesty's permission, and on Major Randal's recommendation, I have chosen you, sir, for a service which will be rewarded according as it is well performed. But you must recollect, that the least whisper that I am not what I seem may prove my ruin, though it can benefit no other party, as it is to avoid sending despatches, that I go myself."

"You need not be afraid, my lord," replied Barecolt; for, though I am a soldier of fortune, yet it has always been my rule to stick to the cause I first espouse till my engagement be up. If I do sell myself to the best bidder, as soon as I have touched a crown the market is over. I am no more for sale. The goods are disposed of; and if I were to go over to the enemy even for an hour, I should look upon it that I was stealing myself—a sort of *felo de se* in the code of honour which I never did and never will be guilty of. Then, as for discretion, my lord, I declare, upon my word, that all the time I am with you I will not utter one syllable of truth. I will be all one tall lie, saving his majesty's presence. You shan't have to accuse me of speaking truth indiscreetly, depend upon it."

"But speaking too much at all, Master Barecolt, may do as much harm," replied Lord Beverley; "a lie is a difficult thing to manage."

"For those who are not accustomed to it, my lord," replied Barecolt, with a low bow; "but I am experienced, sir, and owe my life some twenty times over to a well-managed fiction. Oh! a clumsy lie is a hateful thing, not to be tolerated among gentlemen; and a timid lie is still worse, for it shows cowardice; but a good bold falsehood, well supported and dexterously planted, is as good as a battery at any time."

"Not a very creditable sort of weapon," said Charles, with a grave brow. "But enough of this, sir. Where to deceive an enemy in open strife, to gain a mighty object, such as security, or conceal one's needful proceedings from the eyes of those who have no right to pry, is the end proposed, some palliation may be found, perhaps, for a deviation from the strict truth. Would it were not sometimes necessary," he added, looking round, as if doubtful of the approval of all present; "but, at all events, to

speak unnecessary untruths is as dangerous as it is foolish, and as foolish as it is wicked."

"May it please your majesty," answered Barecolt, whose self-confidence had now fully returned, "what your majesty says is quite just: but some of these necessary lies I suppose we must tell from the beginning. Neither I nor my lord the earl, I take it, must pass for Englishmen, or there will be no more secrecy. We must both say we are Frenchmen, or Dutchmen, or Italians—a good big falsehood to commence with."

Lord Beverley laughed. "I am afraid, sire," he observed, "we must say no more upon the subject, or we shall have a strange treatise upon ethics; but, however, as we go across the country to embark, I will endeavour to drill my friend here to use his tongue as little as may be, so that we shall be spared more fraud than needful. I will now humbly take my leave of your majesty, having received my instructions, and by daybreak to-morrow I will be on my way. May God graciously speed your majesty's cause during my absence." Thus saying, he bent one knee and kissed Charles's hand, and then making a sign to Barecolt to follow, he quitted the presence.

"Now, Master Barecolt," said the earl, as soon as they were in the street, "I know you are a man of action. Be with me by four to-morrow. There is something for your preparations;" and he put a small but heavy leather bag in his hand, adding, "That is all that is needed for a soldier, I know."

"Good faith, I must speak with Lord Walton before I go," answered Barecolt, "though it be somewhat late."

"Well, then, come quick," replied the earl; and he led the way to the lodging of his friend, where, while Barecolt entertained the young nobleman for nearly an hour in a room below, Lord Beverley passed some sweet, though parting moments with bright Annie Walton; and when he left her, her cheek was glowing, and her eyelids moist with tears.

CHAPTER XII.

In a remote part of the country—for England had then remote parts and lonely, which are now broad and open to the busy world—rode along, a little before nightfall, a small party of about ten persons. The weather was clear and mild; but there was in the evening light and in the autumnal hues that touch of melancholy which always accompanies the passing away of any thing that is bright, whether it be a summer's day or a fair season, a joy or a hope. The country was flat and unbroken; but, nevertheless, the eye had no scope to roam, for tall, gloomy-looking rows of trees flanked the narrow road on either side, and many similar lines divided the plain into small fields, which they shaded from the sun, except when he towered at his highest noon. A river, some four or five yards across, slow and almost stagnant, crept along at the side of the lane, with the current just perceptible in the middle, where the water seemed bright and limpid enough; but farther towards the side thick weeds were seen rising from the bottom and spreading over the surface, till, at the very edge, they became tangled into an impenetrable green mass, fringed with flags and

rushes. Over the clearer part of the stream darted the busy water-spinner, and whirling in the air above were myriads of gnats, rising with their irritating hum in tall columns, like the sands of the desert when lifted up by the whirlwind. The light was gray and solemn, and one needed to look to the sky to see that the sun had not actually set.

After riding along this road for the distance of about a mile, a large stone, somewhat like a gravestone, appeared on the side opposite to the water, and one of the horsemen having dismounted to examine what inscription it bore, deciphered, among the moss and lichens that covered it, the following agreeable intelligence: "Here, in the year of grace 1613, and on the 15th day of the month of November, Matthew Peters was murdered by his eldest son Thomas, who was executed for the same on the 10th of the month of December next ensuing, in the town of Hull, the worshipful John Slackman mayor. Reader, take warning by his fate. Go and do not likewise."

If the party was sad before, this memento of crime and suffering did not tend to make it merrier: the horseman mounted his horse again, and they rode on in silence for another mile and a half, when, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the road, which—though it was still seen proceeding in a straight line till it lost itself in the shadows—seemed to lead nowhere, so dull and desolate did it look, there appeared a large shabby building, to the stone-paved forecourt of which the river formed a sort of moat.

First came a square tower of red brick, edged with stone which had once been white, but now was green; then followed a dull low wall, probably that of some long corridor, for a slated roof hung over it, and two narrow windows gave the interior a certain portion of light. This was succeeded by a large centre, or *corps de logis*, flat and formal, solemn and unresponsive, with similar small windows, and a vast deep doorway. Another long, low line of brickwork came after, and then another square tower, and then another mass of brickwork, differing from the former in size and shape, but retaining the same style, and displaying the same melancholy aspect. No ivy grew up around it to break the lines and angles. Not a tree was before it to take off its dull formality. All was heavy, and vast, and grave; and, to look upon it, one could hardly convince one's self, not that it was inhabited, but that it had been cheered by the warm presence of human life for years. No sound was heard, no moving thing was seen, except when one raised one's eyes in search of chimneys, and there one or two tall columns of smoke rose slowly and seriously towards the sky, as if they had made a covenant with the wind not to disturb their quiet and upright course.

Over the water, from the stone court which we have mentioned, swung a drawbridge, which was half elevated, being hooked up by one of the links of the thick chain that suspended it to the posts on the other side, and here one of the men of the party, for it consisted both of men and women, pulled in his horse, saying,

"This is Langley Hall, my lord."

"I know," answered Lord Walton, with a sigh. "It is long since I have been here, but I remember it. We see it at an unfavourable hour, dear Annie. It looks much cheerful in the full light."

"Oh, that matters not, Charles," answered

Miss Walton, in a gentle tone; "sunshine or shade are within the heart more than without; and I shall find it gay or sad, as those I love fare well or ill."

"How shall we get in?" asked Lord Walton, "the drawbridge is half up."

"Oh, there is the bell behind the posts," replied the man who had first spoken; and, dismounting, he pulled a rope, which produced a loud but heavy sound, more like the great bell of a church than that of an ordinary mansion. Some three or four minutes elapsed without any one appearing to answer this noisy summons; but at length an old whiteheaded man came on, and asked cautiously, before he let down the bridge, who was there.

"It is Lord Walton and his sister," answered the young nobleman; "let down the bridge, good man. Lady Margaret expects us."

"Oh, I know that, I know that!" rejoined the old servant; but still, instead of obeying the directions he had received, he retied his steps slowly towards the house. His conduct was soon explained by his calling aloud, "William, William! Come and help here! The bridge is too much for one, and here is the young lord and a whole host of people, men, women, and children. Perhaps it is not the young lord, after all. He was a curly-pated boy when last I saw him, and this looks like a colonel of horse."

"Time! time, Master Dixon; time may make us all colonels of horse," answered a brisk-looking youth in a tight doublet, which set off his sturdy limbs to good advantage, as he strode forward to the old man's assistance.

"Time is a strange changer of curly hair. Doubtless your good dame patted your head some years ago, and called you her pretty boy; and now, if she were to see you, the mother would not know her son, but would call you uncle or grandpapa."

"And so I was a pretty boy—that is very true," answered the old man, coming forward again towards the bridge, well pleased with ancient memories: "and my mother did often pat my head—Lord, I remember it as if it were but yesterday."

"Ah, but you have seen a good many years' days since then, Master Dixon," rejoined the young man, following to the edge of the river with the wise air of self-satisfied youth. "Now, Master Dixon, you unhook while I pull;" and as the bridge was slowly let down, he added, "Give you good even, my lord. You are welcome to Langley. Good even, lady, you are welcome, too, and so are all these pretty dames. My lady will be right glad to see you all."

His words were cheerful, and there is something very reassuring in the gay tones of the human voice. They seem, in the hour of despondency and gloom, to assure us that all is not sadness in the world; that there is truly such a thing as hope; that there are moments of enjoyment, and that the heart is not altogether forbidden to be happy: all matters of which we entertain many doubts when the cloud of sorrow first falls upon us, and hides the brighter things of life from our eyes.

How often is it that the reality belies the outside appearance—if not always, at least generally. In dealing with all things, moral and physical, man deceives himself and is deceived, and never can tell the core by the rind. These are truisms, reader; very true, very often repeated. I know it; I write them as such: but do you

act upon them? or you? or you? Where is the man that does? And if there be a man, where is the woman? The demagogue is judged by his words, the preacher by his sermon, the statesman by his eloquence, the lover by his looks. All seeming—nothing but seeming; and it is not till we come to taste the fruit that we learn the real flavour.

All had seemed dark and gloomy in Langley Hall; and the sadness which Annie Walton had felt in parting with her brother, when strife and danger were before him, had, it is true, though she would not own it, been deepened by the cold aspect of her future habitation. But the man's cheerful tone first raised the corner of the curtain; and when, on entering the wide old hall, she saw the mellow light of the setting sun pouring over a wide champagne country, through a tall window on the other side, and covering the marble floor as it with a network of light and shade, while here a bright suit of armour, and there a cluster of well arranged arms, and there a large picture of some ancient lord of the place, caught the rays and glowed with a look of peaceful comfort, she felt revived and relieved. The next moment, from a door at the far end on the right, came forth an old lady, somewhat tall and upright, in her long stays, with a coil upon her head, in token of widowhood, and her silver-white hair glistening beneath it, but withal a bland and pleasant smile upon her wrinkled face, and fire, almost as bright as that of youth, in her undimmed eye. She embraced her nephew and niece with all the affection and tenderness of a parent, and taking Annie by the hand, gazed on and kissed her again, saying,

"Not like thy mother, Annie! not like thy mother: and yet the eyes—ay, too, and the lips, now you look grave. But come, Charles, come. See where I sit, with my sole companion for the last five years, except when good Dr. Blunt comes over from Hull to tell me news, or the vicar sits with me for an hour on Friday."

As she spoke she led them into a large room, wainscoted with dark chestnut-wood, and from out of the recess of the window, where the sunshine fell, rose a tall, shaggy deer-hound, and with steps majestic and slow walked up to the young lord and lady, examined first the one and then the other with close attention, stretched himself out with a weary yawn, and taking it for granted all was right, laid himself down again to doze where he had been before."

"See, Charles, see what a shrewd dog it is," cried the old lady: "he knows whom he may trust and whom he may not, in a moment. I had old Colonel Northcote here the other day. What he came for I know not, though I do know him to be a rogue; for Basto, there, did naught but growl and show his white teeth close to the good man's legs, till he was glad to get away unbitten."

"I sometimes wish we had their instinct, dear aunt Margaret, rather than our sense," replied her nephew; for one is often much more serviceable than the other."

"Much keener, Charles, at all events," answered the old lady; "and so you are here at length. Well, I got all the letters, and Annie shall be another in the hall when you are gone; and when she is tired of the old woman, she has a sunny chamber where the robins sing, for her own thoughts; and she shall be free to come and go, according to all stipulations, and

no question asked, were it to meet a gallant in the wood."

"Nay, Charles, nay," cried Miss Walton, "why did you write my aunt such tales of me! My only stipulation was, indeed, that I might join him whenever a pause came in these sad doings, my dear aunt."

"Oh, you shall be as free as air, sweet nun!" replied Lady Margaret. "I never could abide to see a poor bird in a cage, or a dog tied by a chain: and when I was young, I was as wild and wilful as my poor sister Ann was staid and good. I have now lived to wellnigh seventy years, still loving all freedom but that which God forbids; still hating all thralldom but that which love imposes. I have been happy, too, in shaping my own course, and I would see others happy in the selfsame way. Come, dear child, while Charles disposes of his men I will show you your bower, where you may reign, queen of yourself and all within it."

Annie followed her aunt from the room, passed through another behind it, and entered a little sort of stone hall or vestibule, lighted from the top. Four doors were in the walls, and a small staircase at the farther end, up which Lady Margaret led the way to the first floor above, where two doors appeared on either hand, with a gallery, fenced with an oaken balustrade, running round the hall, at about twelve feet from the ground. Along this gallery the old lady led her young niece, and then through a long and somewhat tortuous passage, which was crossed by another, some twenty yards down, that branched off to more rooms and corridors beyond. Then came a turn, and then another passage, and at the end three broad low steps led up to a large door.

"Dear aunt," said Miss Walton, who had thought their journey would never end, "your house is a perfect labyrinth. I shall never find my way back."

"It is somewhat crooked in its ways, child," answered Lady Margaret, "but you will make it out in time, never fear; that is to say, as far as you need to know it. Now, here is your bower;" and, opening the door, she led Miss Walton into a large room looking to the south-west. The sun had just gone down, and the whole western sky was on fire with his parting look, so that a rosy light filled the wide chamber from a large bay window, where, raised a step above the rest of the room, was a little platform with two seats, and a small table of inlaid wood.

"There I have sat and worked many a day," said the old lady, pointing to the window; "when my poor knight was at the siege of Ostend. We lived together happily for forty years, Annie, and it was very wrong of him to go away at last without taking me with him. However, we shall soon meet again—that is some comfort; but I have never dwelt in this room since."

As she spoke, a slow pattering sound was heard along the passage, and then a scratch at the door. "It is Basto," said Lady Margaret, "he has come to see that I am not moping myself in my old rooms. Come in, Basto;" and, opening the door, the dog stalked in, first looking up in his mistress's face and wagging his tail deliberately, and then in that of her fair niece with a similar gratulation.

"Ah, thou art a wise man," said Lady Margaret, patting him on the head. "We are growing old, Basto, we are growing old. My husband brought him from Ireland ten years ago, Annie, and he was then some two years old; so, according to dogs' lives, he is about fifty, and yet see what teeth he has," and she opened with her thin, fair, shrivelled hands the beast's powerful jaws.

Miss Walton had in the mean time, been taking a review of her chamber, which her kind aunt had certainly made as comfortable and gay as might be. The colours of all that it contained were light and sparkling, contrasting pleasantly with the dark paneling which lined the whole house. There were chairs and low seats covered with yellow silk, and curtains of the same stuff to draw across the bay window. There were sundry pieces of tapestry for the feet, covered with roses and lilies, and on either side of the vast oak mantel-piece hung brushes of many coloured feathers. But there was no bed; and the next minute, after some farther admiration of the dog's teeth, Lady Margaret opened a door on the right of the fireplace, which led into another room beyond, fitted up as a sleeping chamber, with the same air of comfort as the other. Every thing was pointed out to Annie as long as any light lasted, and then the old lady, showing her a third door, observed, "There is a closet for your maids to sleep in; but we must get back sweet niece, for it is growing dark, and you will fancy goblins in the passage."

Miss Walton laughed, assuring her that she feared nothing but losing her way, and the old lady answered, "Oh, you must learn, you must learn, Annie. 'Tis often good to have a place like this, where one may set search at defiance. In the last reign we had conspiracies enow, God wot, and one poor man, whose head they wanted, was here three days while his enemies were in the house; but they never found him, and yet he walked about at ease."

"Indeed!" said Miss Walton, as they made their way back; "how might that be, my dear aunt. If they searched well in the daylight, I should think there would be little chance of escape."

"More than you know, Annie," answered her aunt, dryly; "but I will tell you all about it some day; and now I will send up William, who is a clever lad, with your maids, to show them the way, and bring your goods and chattels up. But what is all this loud speaking, I wonder."

"I know the voice, I think," answered Miss Walton, "but if I am right as to the person, he should have been over the seas long ago."

CHAPTER XIII.

For England's war revered the claim
Of every unprotected name;
And spared amid its fiercest rage,
Childhood, and womanhood, and age.

So sung a great poet and excellent man; but, begging the master's pardon, if war herself spared them, the consequences of war reached them sadly. It never has been, and never will be, that in times of civil contention, when an-

archy has dissolved the bonds of law, the fierce passions, which in the breasts of too many are only fettered by fear, will not break forth to ravage and destroy. There never was yet strife without crime, and never will be. Certainly, such was not the case in the civil wars of the great rebellion, and many an act was committed with impunity, under cover of the disorders of the time, of the most black and horrible character. True, the justice still held his seat upon the bench, to take cognizance of all crimes but rebellion; true, mayors and corporations existed in cities and exercised municipal authority, but the power thus possessed was not unfrequently used for the gratification of the person who held it on the side of the Parliament, and, if not held by one of that party, was utterly disregarded by those who were.

Of this fact, Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was very well aware; and after making his escape from the carriages during the skirmish at the bridge, he had, with the assistance of his companion, dragged poor Arrah Neil along with him, assuring the Parliamentary committee-man who accompanied him, that he did it solely to deliver the poor girl from the men of Belial, with whom she was consorting, and to place her in the hands of a chosen vessel, a devout woman of his neighbourhood, whom he likened, in an irreverent strain, to Anna the prophetess.

Whether his companions put full faith in his sincerity and singleness of purpose or not, does not much matter: Captain Batten was not one to quarrel with any one's hypocrisy; and, indeed, it seemed that a sort of agreement had been made among the Roundheads, like that by which men take paper money instead of gold and silver, to let each man's religious pretences pass current as genuine coin, however flimsy might be the materials of which they were made. The real purpose of Mr. Dry was to take poor Arrah Neil back to Bishop's Merton for his own views; and his motives were, as the reader will learn hereafter, of a very mixed character. But after having wandered about with Batten and Dr. Bastwick for two days, during the course of which he was more than once seen studying a packet of old letters, he expressed a strong desire to go under the escort of some body of Parliamentary troops into Yorkshire, where he declared he had just recollected having some business of importance to transact. No opportunity occurred for several days, during which time the whole party who had escaped from the Cavaliers, at the invitation of the worthy common councilmen of Coventry, took up their abode for a time in that ancient city, Mr. Dry watching poor Arrah Neil with the closest care, and giving out to the landlady of the inn at which he lodged that she was a poor ward of his, of weak understanding, one whom it was necessary to keep a strict guard. The pious landlady of Coventry believed every word that Mr. Dry thought fit to tell her. How could she do otherwise, indeed, with so very devout a person; and, to say the truth, the demeanour and appearance of Arrah Neil did not serve to belie the assertions of the old hypocrite who had her in his power. She remained the greater part of each day plunged in deep and melancholy musings, and though she more than once attempted to escape, and said she

was wrongfully detained, yet she entered into so long explanations, notwithstanding sundry opportunities afforded her by the hostess, who was not without her share of curiosity. The fit, or, as she called it, the cloud of gloom, had come upon her again. It had passed away, indeed, during the active and bustling time of the march from Bishop's Merton, and so, indeed, it always did, either in moments when all went clear and smoothly, or in times of great difficulty and danger; but still it returned when any of the bitter sorrows and pangs of which every life has some, and hers had too many, crossed her way and darkened the prospect of the future.

It was not sullenness, reader; it was no gloomy bitterness of spirit; it was no impatience of the ills that are the lot of all; it was no rebellious murmuring against the will of God; neither was it madness, nor any thing like it, though she acted sometimes strangely, and sometimes wildly, as it seemed to the common eyes of the world, from a strong and energetic determination of accomplishing her object at the time, joined with the utter want of that experience of the world which would have taught her how to accomplish it by ordinary means. What was it, then, you will ask, and may think it strange when I say, *memory*. But so it was; memory confused and vague of things long gone before, which formed so strong a contrast with the present, that whenever sorrow or disappointment fell upon her, some former time, some distant scenes of which she knew not the when or the where, rose up before her eyes, and made her, herself, believe that she was mad. She recollected bright looks and kind words, and days of happiness, and nights of peace and repose, to which she could not give a "local habitation and a name." Were they visions? she asked herself; were they dreams? where could they have occurred? what could they have been? Was it from some book which she had read, she often inquired, that such fanciful pictures had been gleaned, and had then fixed themselves as realities in her mind?

She could not tell; but when such memories rose up, they took possession of her wholly—bewildered, confused, overpowered her. For a time she was a creature of the past; she scarcely believed in the present; she knew not which was the reality, the things gone by or the things that surrounded her.

During the whole time that she remained at Coventry, this cloud was upon her, and she paid little attention to any thing but the continual questioning of her own heart and mind. She attempted, as we have said, to escape; indeed, more than once; but it was by impulse rather than by thought; and when frustrated, she fell at once back again into meditation. She did not remark that Dry treated her in a very different manner from that which he had ever displayed towards her before; that he called her "Missess Arrah;" that he tried to soothe and to amuse her. She noticed, indeed without much attention, that different clothing had been provided for her from that which she had been accustomed to wear; but, whenever her mind turned from the past towards the present again, her thoughts busied themselves with Charles Walton and his sister, and she would have given worlds to know how it fared with those she loved.

That the victory had been won by the Cavaliers she was aware, but at what price it had

been bought she could not tell; and she trembled to think of it. No one, indeed, spoke to her upon the subject, for Dry was silent; and, for reasons of his own, he took care that she should be visited by none but the landlady of the inn.

At length two pieces of intelligence reached him, on the third day after their arrival in Coventry, which made him resolve to pursue his journey into Yorkshire. The first of these was communicated to him by one of his own servants, to whom he had sent shortly after the skirmish, and was to the effect that the great majority of the people of Bishop's Merton had espoused the Royalist cause, and that messengers had arrived from Lord Walton, ordering him to be apprehended immediately, if he made his appearance in the place. With this news, however, came the money he had sent for; and on the evening of the same day Dr. Bastwick brought him the second piece of information, which was merely that a troop of the Parliamentary horse would pass through Coventry the following day, on their road to Hull, where Sir John Hotham was in command for the Parliament. It was added that Master Dry might march safely under their escort, and he accordingly spent the rest of the evening in buying horses and equipage for himself and Arrah Neil, and set out the following day on his journey.

The tedious march towards Hull need not be related; during the whole of the way the old man rode beside his charge, plying her with soft and somewhat amorous words, mingled strangely and horribly with texts from Scripture, perverted and misapplied, and graced with airs of piety and devotion, which those who knew him well were quite aware had no share with his dealings or his heart.

Arrah Neil paid little attention to him—answered seldom, and then but by a monosyllable. To escape was impossible, for he had now two servants with him, and she was never left alone for a moment, except when locked into a room during a halt; yet she looked anxiously for the opportunity, and whenever any objects were seen moving through the country as they passed, her heart beat with the hope of some party of Cavaliers being nigh, and giving her relief. Such, however, did not prove the case, and about noon of an autumnal day they entered the town of Hull.

Here Mr. Ezekiel Dry separated himself from the troop, with thanks for their escort, and made his way towards the centre of the town, where stood the house of a friend, with whom he had often transacted business of different kinds. The friend, however, had, since he saw him, married a wife, and was absent from the town; and though Mr. Dry assured a demure-looking maid-servant, who opened the door, that his friend Jeremiah had always told him he might use his house as his own, the maid knew Jeremiah better than Mr. Dry, and demurred receiving any guests during her master's absence.

When the worthy gentleman had finished his conversation, and made up his mind that he must seek an inn, he turned round to remount his horse, and was somewhat surprised to see Arrah Neil gazing round her with a degree of light, and even wonder in her look, for which he perceived no apparent cause. The street was a dull and dingy one; most of the houses were of wood, with the gables turned towards the road, and from the opposite side projected a long pole, from which swung a square piece of painted wood, representing in very rough and rude a

the figure of a swan, the size of life. Yet over the dark and time-stained face of the buildings, up the line of narrow street, round the windows and doors carved with quaint figures, ran the beautiful eyes of Arrah Neil, with a look of eager satisfaction which Ezekiel Dry could in no degree account for. They rested principally upon the figure of the swan, however; and as that emblem showed that it was a house of public entertainment, thither Mr. Dry turned the horses' heads, and bade her alight at the door.

Arrah sprang to the ground in a moment, and entered the house with an alacrity which Mr. Dry had never seen her before display. Something appeared to have enchanted her, for she almost outran the hostess, who led the way, saying, "This way, pretty lady—this way, sir." But when she stopped at a door in a long, open corridor, Arrah Neil actually passed her, exclaiming,

"No, not that room—I should prefer this," and without waiting for an answer, she opened the door and went in.

"Dear lady, you seem to know the house quite well," said the hostess; "but yet I do not recollect having seen your pretty face before."

"Talk not of such vanities," said Mr. Dry, with a solemn tone; "what is beauty but the dust, and fair flesh but as a cloud of clay?"

"Well, I am sure!" said the landlady, who was what Mr. Dry would have called a carnal and self-seeking person, but a very good woman notwithstanding. "Ah, sir, what you say is very true; we are all nothing but clouds of earth; there can be no doubt of it: it's a very true, indeed."

Finding her so far docile, Mr. Dry determined to make a still greater impression, in order to ensure that his object of keeping Arrah Neil within his grasp should not be frustrated by the collusion of the landlady. He therefore set to work, and held forth to her upon godliness, and grace, and self-denyingness, and other Christian virtues; touching a little upon original sin, predestination, election, and other simple and easy subjects, with a degree of clearness and perspicuity such as might be expected from his original station and means of information. The landlady was confounded and puzzled; but as it was utterly impossible to tell what he really meant by the unconnected images, quotations, and dogmas which he pronounced, she was unconvinced of anything but of his being a vehement Puritan, which she herself was not.

However, as it did not do to offend a customer, she shook her head and looked sad, and cried from time to time, "Ah, very true! God help us! poor sinners that we are;" with sundry other exclamations, which, though they did not convince Mr. Dry that she had not a strong hankering for the flesh-pots of Egypt and the abominations of the Amorites, yet showed him that she was very well inclined to please him, and made him believe that she would fulfil his bidding to the letter.

He accordingly called her out of the room as soon as he thought he had produced his effect, and explaining to her what he pleased to call the situation of his poor ward, he warned her particularly to keep the door locked upon her, to suffer no one to hold communication with her, and especially to prevent her from getting out, for fear she'd throw herself into the water, or make away with herself, which he represented to be not at all unlikely.

The hostess assured him that she was deeply

grieved to hear the young lady's case. She could not have believed it, she said, she looked so sensible and cheerful.

"Ah," replied Mr. Dry, "you will see her dull enough soon. It comes upon her by fits; but you must attend very punctually to my orders, or something may take place for which you will weep in sackcloth and ashes."

"Oh, sir, I will attend to them most particularly," said the landlady. "What will you please to order for dinner, sir? Had not I better put the lady down a round-pointed knife? Is she dangerous with her hands?"

"Oh no," answered Mr. Dry. "It is to herself, not to others, she is dangerous. And as for dinner, send up any thing you have got, especially if it be high flavoured and relishing, for I have but a poor appetite. I will be back in about an hour; and, in the mean time, can you tell me where in this town lives one Hugh O'Donnell, an Irishman, I believe?"

The landlady paused and considered, and then replied that she really could not tell; she had heard of such a person, and believed it was somewhere at the west of the town, but she was not by any means sure.

The moment Mr. Dry was gone, the good woman called to the cook, and ordered a very substantial dinner for her party which had just arrived; but then, putting her hand before her eyes, she stood for the space of a minute and a half in the centre of the tap-room, as if in consideration; then saying, "There is something strange in this affair! I am met a woman if I don't find it out," she hurried up to the room where she had left Arrah Neil, unlocked the door, and went in.

Arrah Neil was leaning on the sill of the open window, gazing up and down the street. Her face was clear and bright; her beautiful eyes were full of intellect and fire; the look of doubt and inward thought was gone; a change had come over her, complete and extraordinary; it seemed as if she had awakened from a dream. When the landlady entered, Arrah immediately turned from the window and advanced towards her. Then laying her hand upon her arm, she gazed in her face for a moment so intently that the poor woman began to be alarmed.

"I am sure I recollect you," said Arrah Neil. "Have you not been here long?"

"For twenty years," replied the hostess; "and for five-and-twenty before that in the house next door, from which I married into this."

"And don't you recollect me?" asked Arrah Neil.

"No," replied the landlady, "I do not, though I think I have seen some one very like you before; but then it was a taller lady—much taller."

"So she was," cried Arrah Neil. "What was her name?"

"Nay, I can't tell, if you can't," replied the landlady.

"I know what I called her, but I know nothing more," answered Arrah Neil. "I called her mother—and perhaps she was my mother. I called her mother as I lay in that bed, with my head aching, my eyes burning, and my lips parched; and then I fell into a long, deep sleep, from which I woke forgetting all that went before; and she was gone!"

"Ay!" cried the landlady; "and are you the poor little thing?" and she gazed upon her for a moment with a look of sad, deep interest. The next instant she cast her arms round her, on

kissed her tenderly. "Ah, poor child," she said at length, with tears in her eyes, "those were sad times—sad times indeed. 'Twas when the fever was raging in the country. Sad work in such days for those who lodge strangers. It cost me my only one. A man came and slept in that bed; he looked ill when he came, and worse when he went. Then came a lady and a child, and an old man, their servant, and the house was full all but this room; and ere they had been ere long, my own dear child was taken with the fever. She was near your own age, perhaps a year older; and I told the lady over night, so that she said she would go on the morrow, for she was afraid for her darling. But before the morning came, you too were shaking like a willow in the wind, and then came on the burning fit, and the third day you began to rave, and knew no one. The fifth day my poor girl died, and for a whole day I did not see you—I saw nothing but my dead child. On the next, however, they came to tell me the lady had fallen ill, and I came to watch you, for it seemed to me as if there was something between you and my poor Lucy—I knew not what; you had been weak in sickness, and I thought you might be in the grave. I cannot help crying when I think of it. Oh, those were terrible days!" And the poor woman wiped her eyes.

"But my mother," cried Arrah Neil, "my mother?"

"Some day I will show you where she lies," answered the hostess; and Arrah wept bitterly, as a hope was crushed out to its last spark.

"She got worse and worse," continued the landlady, "and she too lost her senses; but, just as you were slowly getting a little better, she suddenly recovered her mind, and I was so glad, that I thought she would recover too; but the first words she spoke were to ask after you. So I told her you were much better; and all she said was, 'I should wish to see her once more before die, if it may be done without harming her'; and then I knew that she was going. I and the old servant carried you, just as you were, and laid you on her bed, and she kissed you, and prayed God to bless and keep you; but you were weak and dozy, and she would not have you awakened, but made us take you back; and then she spoke long with the old man in a whisper; at all I heard was, 'You promise, Neil—you promise on your salvation.' He did promise, though I did not know what it was. Then she said, 'Recollect, you must never tell her unless she recovered.' Recovered or reversed, she said, I remember not well which; but from that moment she said nothing more but to ask for me water, and so she went on till the next morning, just as day was dawning, and then she parted."

A short space passed in silent tears on the part of Arrah Neil, while the good woman who told the tale remained gazing forth from the window; at length she continued, "Before you could go across the floor again, my husband died; but with him it was very quick. He was but three days between health and death; and when I had a little recovered, I used foolishly to wish that you could stay with me, and be like my poor uncle; but you were a lady, and I was a poor woman, so that could not be; and in about six weeks the old man paid all that was owing, and took you away. It is strange to think that you would be the same pretty child that lay there just near ten years ago."

"It is as strange to me as to you," said Arrah Neil; "for, as I tell you, I seemed to fall into a deep sleep, and for a time I forgot all; but since then, all the things that went before that time have troubled me sadly. It seemed as if I had had a dream, and I recollect a castle on a hill, and riding with a tall gentleman, who was on a great black horse, while I had a tiny thing, milk white; and I remember many servants and maids—oh, and many things I have never seen since; but I could not tell whether it was real or a mere fancy, till I came into this town, and I saw the street which I used to look at from the window, and the sign of the house that I used to watch as it swung to and fro in the wind. Then I was sure it was real; and your face, too, brought a thousand things back to me; and when I saw the room where I had been, I felt inclined to weep, I knew not why. Well, well may I weep."

"But who is this old man who is with you?" asked the landlady, suddenly. "He is not the old servant, who was as aged then as he is now; and what is this tale he tells of your being his ward and mad?"

"Mad!" cried Arrah Neil; "mad! Oh no! 'Tis he that is wicked, not I that am mad. He and another dragged me away from those who protected me and were good to me—kind Annie Walton, and that noble lord her brother, while they were fighting on the moors beyond Coventry. I his ward! He has no more right to keep me from my friends than the merest stranger. He is a base, bad man—a hypocrite—a cheat. What he wants, what he wishes, I know not. But he had my poor old grandfather dragged away to prison, and he died by the road."

"Your grandfather?" said the widow: "what was his name?"

"Neil," answered the poor girl: "that was the name he always went by."

"Why, that was the old servant," said the hostess. "He had been a soldier, and fought in many battles. I have heard him tell it often. But this man—this man has some object, young lady. He knows more of you than perhaps you think. He told me that you were mad, and his ward; but he knew not that you had a friend so near at hand, who, though she be a poor, humble woman—Hark! there are people speaking at the door. 'Tis he, I dare say. Say not a word to him, and we will talk more by-and-by. Do not be afraid: he shall not take you away again so easily, if there be yet law in the land. But he must not find me with you;" and, thus saying, she opened the door and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE landlady paused for a moment at the door, laid her finger upon her brow, thought for a minute or two, and then, having settled her whole plan to her own satisfaction, descended to the door, at which Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was making sundry inquiries regarding the personage for whose address he had, in the first place, applied to herself, and whom he evidently had not found out in his perambulations of the town. A part of what he said was heard by the hostess as she descended, so that she had a full clw to what was going on, and, advancing towards him with a low, smart courtesy, she said,

"The dinter's quite ready, sir; and I have

been thinking since you were gone, that I shall be able to-morrow morning to get you the address of the gentleman you wanted, for a man will be here with eggs who used to supply him, I know."

Mr. Dry looked up with a well-satisfied air, saying, "That is providential, Mistress Green."

"White, sir, White," said the landlady, dropping another courtesy; "my name is White, not Green—a different colour, sir, but it all comes to the same thing. Shall I call the young lady to dinner? It is in this room, sir."

"I will go myself, Mistress White," said Dry; and he was advancing towards the stairs, when the landlady, in a low and confidential whisper, added,

"Poor thing, she is very wild indeed. I went up just now to see if she wanted any thing, and she is quite astray, thinking that she was here not long ago, and fancying that she knows all about the place. It's a sad thing to see a poor creature in such a state."

"Alack, alack, and so it is," rejoined Mr. Dry; "but it's God's will, Mrs. White, and so we must submit."

"Ah, sir, that's very true," answered the good hostess, "but yet one can't help pitying the poor girl. You are sure she is not dangerous, sir?"

"Quite sure," answered Mr. Dry: "it is only to herself. But if she were left alone to do what she wills, I would not answer for it that you would not find her in the Humber."

"Oh, she must be looked to, sir—she must be looked to," replied the landlady. "Those are sad, dangerous cases. I remember right well when Jonathan Birker, at Burton—he was my husband's second cousin, poor, dear man—went mad and hanged himself—"

"I will hear that story after dinner," said Dry, in return, pushing past her, and opening the door of the room in which Arrah Neil was seated. But the good landlady had gained her point, having fully convinced Mr. Dry that she believed the poor girl whom he had brought thither to be perfectly insane; and her manner during the meal, which followed immediately after, served to confirm the worthy gentleman in that supposition, without at all inducing Arrah herself to imagine that her new friend had any doubt of her sanity.

Though the days had gone by when, as a universal custom, the landlord and his guest sat down together at the same table, and, if the traveller presented himself at any other hours than those of the host's own meals, he was likely to remain hungry till the master of the house chose to eat, yet in all cases he who supplied the fare and he who received it were still much more intimately mixed up at meal times than in the present day, when the duties of the hostly office are done by deputy, and the landlord is intent upon any other cares but hospitable ones.

In the present instance, good Mrs. White remained in the room with her maid, who acted the important part of waiter; and ever and anon she meddled busily with the dishes, commended the viands to the jaws of her guests, vaunted the excellence of the ale, strong waters, and wine, which her house afforded, and when not thus employed upon matters connected with her own immediate vocation, took part in the conversation of those who sat at table, with great freedom and satisfaction.

Towards Arrah Neil her tone was of that tender and kindly character, which might well be

attributed by Mr. Dry to compassion for the mental affliction under which he had declared her to be suffering, and by the poor girl herself to interest in her fate and situation. But the good landlady was watching eagerly the whole conduct of her male guest, and endeavouring, with all the skill which is afforded by long dealings with many of our fellow-creatures, to extract some information from all she saw regarding his intentions and objects. She perceived that the worthy man of Longsoaken was as tender upon her whom he called his ward as was consistent with his sanctified exterior, that he often whispered a word to her with a smile which contorted his harsh and wizened features into any thing but a pleasant expression, and that he made a point of helping her himself to every thing which he thought dainty; and, from these and various other signs and indications, Mrs. White was led to ask herself, "Does the old hypocrite seek her for a wife or a paramour?" and she internally added, "I'll spoil the game for him, that I will."

But, notwithstanding her internal resolutions, the good landlady remained perfectly civil and attentive to Mr. Dry, and, guided by tokens, which were not to be mistaken by one of her experience, as to his fondness for certain creature comforts of existence, she at length produced some clear and brilliant liquid, the produce of the Dutch still, in a large, flat-sided black bottle, and persuaded him to drink what she called a small glass thereof, though, to say the truth, the measure was very capacious. When he had drank it, he set down the glass again, and, looking up in Mrs. White's face, observed,

"It is very good indeed, madam, and may be permitted for the support of our poor weak bodies after a long ride in such bleak and disconsolate weather."

"Take another glass, sir," said the hostess, who stood at the end of the table, with the bottle still in her hand.

"On no account—on no account, Mistress White," replied her guest; "we may use such things discreetly, but by no means go into excess. I would not for the world—don't talk of it."

There are two ways, however, of understanding that same injunction, "Don't talk of it," which those who have been accustomed to read the book of human nature find no great difficulty in applying properly, and in this instance, as in many others, Mrs. White saw that it meant "Don't talk of it, but do it without talking;" and therefore replying, "Oh, sir, it's very weak; it's so old, 'tis scarcely stronger than water," she poured the glass full as it stood at Mr. Dry's elbow, while he turned round to say something to Arrah Neil on his other side.

The worthy gentleman took not the slightest notice of this proceeding, but, looking up in Mrs. White's face, he said,

"And so you think, ma'am, that you will be able to get me Master Hugh O'Donnell's right address by to-morrow morning?"

"I am certain of that," replied the landlady, who thought there was no great harm in a little confidence, whatever might be the result.

Arrah Neil looked down in silent thought, and then raised her large, bright eyes with an inquiring look in the landlady's face; while Mr. Dry, as if in a fit of absentmindedness, took up the glass, and sipped nearly one half of the contents

before he recollected what he was about. He then, however, set it down suddenly, and inquired,

"Pray, can you tell me if Mr. Twigg, the dry-salter, is now in Hull? A God-fearing and saintly man, Mrs. White, who used to hold forth to the edification of a flock that used to assemble at the tabernacle in Backwater Alley."

"Oh dear, yes, sir; he is in Hull," answered Mrs. White. "I saw the good gentleman only yesterday."

"Then I will go and see him presently," answered Mr. Dry. "Humble-minded folks may always profit much of godly conversation; and, to do him but justice, he is always ready to use his spiritual gifts for the benefit of others." Thus speaking, Mr. Dry, after contemplating the glass for a moment, seemed to come to the conclusion that there was no use of leaving in it the little that remained, and accordingly he tossed it off with a sudden motion of the hand, and then set it resolutely down upon the table again, as if defying the landlady, the Hollands, or the devil, to tempt him to drink another drop.

The fiend and women, however, have generally more than one way of accomplishing their object, and consequently Mrs. White, after having pronounced an eulogium on the graces of Mr. Twigg and his friend Master Theophilus Longbone, the hemp-merchant who was likewise an acquaintance of her guest, she set down the bottle carelessly by Mr. Dry's side, and retired into a little room, with a glass-window towards the passage, so constructed as to afford a view of the door of the house, with all those of the chambers on the ground-floor, and also of the foot of the stairs.

Here she remained for about half an hour, while sundry persons came in and out, spoke to her or to some of her attendant satellites, paid money, received change, brought in goods for sale, among which it may be as well to record six pairs of very fine pigeons in a basket, or apportioned for small quantities of cordials, which sometimes they drank upon the spot, sometimes carried away in a vial bottle.

At length the door of the room in which Mr. Dry had eaten his dinner opened, and that worthy gentleman appeared, holding Arrah Neil by the arm, and looking at her with a somewhat inflamed and angry countenance, from which Mrs. White surmised that he was about to say something harsh and bitter to his fair companion. She prepared, accordingly, to interfere, fully resolved to protect the poor girl at all risks, even if she were obliged to call in the aid of magistrates, town-council, and governor himself; although, to say the truth, she had no great love or reverence for any of the party now dominant in Hull.

Mr. Dry, however, uttered not a word, but led his poor victim up to her chamber, made her go in, and locking the door, took out the key. Mrs. White smiled, as with quick ear she heard the various steps of this process, but sat quite still at what we shall now call the bar, and marked the movements of Mr. Dry as he descended and stood for a moment in the passage, those movements being somewhat peculiar, and indicating an internal perturbation of some sort. His back, indeed, was turned towards the worthy hostess, as he looked out of the door leading into the street; but she perceived that, with his feet somewhat apart, he first rested on his heels, then upon the sole, then upon his heels again,

his body gently swaying backward and forward, and his hands in his breeches-pocket. Mrs. White had seen such oscillations before in other men; and, when Mr. Dry made up his mind to the course he was to pursue, and walked straight out into the street, she herself hastened into the eating-room, where the first object that she examined was the black bottle, which, being held up to the light, exhibited a deficiency of at least one half.

"Ay, the beast is wellnigh drunk," said Mrs. White, speaking to herself; "but that's a small matter, if he does no more than get tipsy now and then. I'll warrant he'll be in a fine state when he comes home from Master Twigg's. He's just such another as himself; and they'll sit there, and drink, and cant, till they all go home crying or quarrelling, as if they were the most unhappy men in the world! Well, religion is a good thing in its way, and drink is a good thing; but they don't do mixed, any how."

Thus saying, she carried off the black bottle, placed it in its own peculiar receptacle, and then calling a girl whom she named Nancy to take her place in the bar, she walked quietly up to the room of Arrah Neil. It may be recollected by the reader that Mr. Dry had carefully locked the door, and put the key in his pocket; but Mrs. White was not a person to be frustrated by such a simple proceeding; for, putting her hand to her girdle, from which hung a ponderous bunch of variously formed pieces of iron, she selected one from the rest, which, being inlaid into the keyhole, instantly turned the lock, and gave her admission to the chamber without the slightest difficulty.

Arrah Neil started up with a look of joy, brushing away some drops that had gathered in her eyes, and exclaiming, "Oh, I am so glad!"

"What, poor soul!" cried Mrs. White, "you thought he had shut you up so that nobody could get to you. But I am not such a fool as to be without a master-key in my own house, so that if any other be lost I can always open a door. What has the old man been saying to you, my dear, and what made him look so cross?"

"Oh!" cried Arrah Neil, "he has been saying things I do not understand; and then he asked if I would marry him, and said that, if I would, I should have all his money at his death; but I told him that, if he had all the wealth in the world, I would sooner die."

"Ay, that's what made him cross," cried the landlady. "Men do not like such words as that, my dear. However, you did very right, for the sooner you let the old hypocrite know your mind, the better. He's a deep old villain, though, or I am mistaken. I saw you looked at me when he mentioned Hugh O'Donnell. Do you know any thing about him? Do you recollect the name?"

"Yes, I do," replied Arrah Neil. "I am sure I have heard it often, but it must be long ago. Who is he? What is he?"

"Nay, that I can't tell," answered Mrs. White. "I recollect him here, I think, in my husband's time; and I have seen him once or twice about, since then, in the streets of the town, and in the market. But I know nothing of him, except that he is a good sort of man, I believe. One sees such a number of people in a town like this! He's got a ship, I believe, and trades to Ireland."

"To Ireland," said Arrah Neil. And then, suddenly breaking off, she added, "I wish I could

get away. Cannot you let me out while he's gone?"

"Oh, that I can, my pretty lady," answered the hostess, "and you shall go away whenever you like. I won't stop you. But I think it will be a great deal better for you to stay a while, and see what all this comes to. We may find out something that may clear up the whole business; and, besides, what would you do if you were away? Without money you would be in a sad plight, and I dare say he does not let you have any in your pocket?"

"I have two crown-pieces," replied Arrah Neil, "and with that I am sure I could get to Annie Walton and her brother."

The widow shook her head with a sad smile. "'Tis a small sum to begin the world with," she said, "and all alone. Besides, they might overtake you. No, no, poor thing, leave it to me to settle some plan for you. I will answer for it, he shall not take you away from here, let him do what he will; and, in the mean time, I will set my wits to work to find out the whole of this story. But now let me hear who is this Annie Walton and her brother? Come, sit down by me, and tell me all you can recollect since the times we were talking of this morning. It may help me to find out the rest, and that's the great point."

Arrah Neil mused; not that she had any hesitation in relating to her companion all that her own memory served to recall, for it is not those who have had few friends that are suspicious, but those who have had friends that have proved false. She had too rarely met with the voice of kindness and sympathy not to yield her ear to it willingly, especially when it came from one who was linked to the sad, but sweet recollections of the past. She had lived so long in a dream, however—a dream from which nothing but the most important scenes and figures had stood forth in full light—that much was confused and indistinct; and she felt that she could but relate it as it presented itself to remembrance, which, she feared, might afford but a faint and misty image to a stranger. It was with the good widow's first question, then, that she commenced in making her reply. "Annie Walton!" she said; "I wonder you have never heard of her, she is so kind and so good; every one knows her by her benefits."

"Ay; but, if I understand right, my poor young lady, she lives a long way off on the other side of Coventry," replied the hostess; "and while wicked doings travel on horseback, the report of good ones trudges afoot. Like the wagoner's cart, it may be richly loaded, but is long in coming."

"Well, then," answered Arrah Neil, "she is Lord Walton's daughter, sister of kind Charles Walton, who is now lord. The old man died two years ago, and the lady long before that. However, they have always been good to me and to my poor old grandfather ever since we went to live at Bishop's Merton. 'Tis a long while ago now, and between the time when I was here and the days I first recollect there, there seems a sort of gap, as if we had lived somewhere else. But I remember well our first arriving there, and going with my grandfather to look at two or three cottages, till at length he chose one just out of the town, upon the green, by the old church."

"Were you then quite alone with him as you went from Hull?" asked the landlady.

"Quite," answered Arrah Neil. "There was no one with us, and we lived there quite alone, and all the morning my grandfather used to teach me all he knew, and to make me read and write many an hour, and copy things out of books, and explain to me about different countries. I often thought it wearisome, for it used to keep me from thinking of things that were past, and from trying to bring back to mind people and places that seemed to cross my sight in haste and disappear again, like the images that we see in the sunshine, which are lost as soon as they get into the shade. But he was a good, kind old man, and everybody loved him. The boys used to gather round him on the green at evening close, and listen to the stories he used to tell of the wars in Ireland; and Lord Walton, from whom he hired the cottage, was very kind too, and often used to stop and talk with him as he went by; and Charles, the young lord, too, and Miss Walton, did the same. I used very often to go up to the house, too, and spent many a happy day there, and they were all very good, though I sometimes fancy that on account of my strange ways, and because I often fell into fits of thought, they thought I was somewhat weak in mind; but if I could have seen this house, it would soon have brought my brain right. But, as I was saying, they were always very kind to me; and Charles Walton would spend many an hour at the cottage, and listen to my grandfather's tales."

"Ay," said the hostess, "he was an old soldier, but he did not understand all the arts of war."

Arrah Neil looked up in her face with an inquiring air, but good Mrs. White only shook her head, and the poor girl proceeded. "Charles Walton was away in strange countries for a long time, and then again he went to the wars; but whenever he came back, he used to visit us, though he grew graver and more thoughtful as he became older, than he was when he was a youth and I was a child, and I began to feel somewhat afraid of him—no, not afraid, for he was always kind Charles Walton to me; but I felt timid when he spoke to me. However, his father died, and he became lord of all the country round; and he had much to do, and was often away. About that time, this man, who is now here in Hull, began to come sometimes to the house, but my grandfather could not bear him; and though he treated him civilly, because he was now in great power in the little town, and every one seemed to do just as he bade them, and all were afraid of him, yet he was always cold and distant to him. One day, however, this Ezekiel Dry came in while he was out, and he took me by the hand, and began to say things I did not understand, as he did to-night; and I tried to go away, but he would not let me. Just then my grandfather came in, and immediately there were high and threatening words, and my grandfather struck him with the staff he carried, and knocked him down upon the ground; then, taking him by the arms, he cast him out of the cottage like a dog. After that he did not come again for many months, and in the winter my poor old grandfather was taken ill, and remained ever after feeble and sickly; and when he used to hear of the doings of the Parliament against the king, it always made him worse, and he used to speak rash words, I fear; and once or twice he wrote letters, and sent them off by a man that sometimes came to see him, and he received answers to them, which he burned as soon as he had

read them. So it went on, till one day this summer, when my grandfather was very ill in bed, the man Dry came with a number of soldiers, and said they had a warrant against him as a malignant who was plotting treason against the Parliament, and they dragged him away in spite of all I could say, though I told them it would kill him. Lord Walton was absent then, and Dry would fain have prevented me from going with my grandfather; but one of the soldiers was kinder than the rest, and said I should go to tend the poor old man. They put us in a cart and carried us along, and day by day he grew weaker, till at length, at Devizes, he died. Before his death, however, just when his eyes were turning dim, he whispered to me, 'Go back quick to the cottage, Arrah, and in the back room, behind the bed, you will find a bundle of letters and other things which will tell you all about yourself—I cannot,' and he said no more."

"Did you find them? Did you find them?" cried the landlady, eagerly.

"No," answered Arrah Neil; "for when I got back to the cottage, it had been stripped of every thing, and I, too, had been robbed of all I had taken with me by the soldiers on the road. One of them said that my own was pretty, and he would have it for his wife; so I gave it to him, for fear he should take it by force."

The good hostess had nuzzed, paying little attention to the last few words; but at length she exclaimed, "He has got them, young lady! He has got these letters, depend upon it—ay, and he knows more of you than any of us. You must find means to get them back again. That is the only thing to be done."

"Alas! how can I?" cried poor Arrah Neil. "I am a mere prisoner, and unable to do any thing for myself. Oh, if I could but escape, I should be content."

"Nay, nay, be not so impatient," said Mrs. White; "you shall escape in good time—I give you my word for that; but let us first find out all that we can, for I have a notion that your fortunes are better than they look, or else this man would not be so eager to keep you in his hands. You were no grand-daughter of old Sergeant Neil's, that I can tell you; and you may turn out a great lady, after all. I am sure your poor mother looked and spoke like one of the best of the land, and I do not see why you should not have your right as well as another."

"A great lady! said Arrah Neil, in a musing tone, and with a melancholy shake of the head; "there is but one reason I should like to be a great lady, and that is to show my gratitude to those who have been kind to me."

"And a good reason too," replied the landlady. "So you must not miss your chance, my dear."

"Dame White! Dame White!" cried a voice from below.

"Hark! they are calling me," said the hostess; and, opening the door, she exclaimed, "Here am I; what do you want with me, Nancy?"

"Here are a heap of folks want to see you directly," screamed Nancy, from the bottom of the stairs.

"I must go, my dear," said the widow, turning to Arrah Neil, "but I will be back with you directly;" and, thus saying, she left her. But poor Arrah was disappointed in regard to the length of her absence, for more than an hour passed, and the door gave admission to no friendly face.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE is upon the Yorkshire coast, somewhat to the south of Flamborough Head, a small, retired bay, not above a quarter of a mile broad, but deep in relation to the width, for the distance from each of the projecting headlands from which it is formed to the innermost part of the bay is nearly three quarters of a mile. This little natural haven is furnished with a sandy shore, and surrounded by steep rocks at all points but that where it is united with the ocean, and at the mouth of a short, narrow valley, which leads with a rapid ascent to the top of the cliffs above. Were it not that it is so difficult of access from the land side, and that the water therein is somewhat shallow, it might form an excellent port, sheltered from almost all winds. But these circumstances have rendered it less frequented than it might be; and though a few boatmen's cottages are now built upon the shore, it is but little known, and, at the time I speak of, was without any vestige of human habitation, and rarely trodden by the foot of man.

At about three o'clock, however, of an autumnal night, a boat might be dimly discovered lying on the sandy shore, the tide being then at ebb. In it were four men, apparently sailors, two of whom were stretched sound asleep in the stern, while two sat talking together in low tones on the gunwale of the boat, and supplying the intervals of conversation by inaudible potent whiffs of the meditative pipe. As neither the topics they discussed nor the language that they used would be either pleasant or edifying to the reader, we shall not pause upon their discourse, but leave them snoring and talking on, to follow two horsemen down from the entrance of the valley, as, at a slow and cautious pace, they were guided on by a youth some fifteen or sixteen years of age, who, in the hope of a proportionate recompense, took care to point out to them the various obstacles that lay in the way. Now it was a mass of rock, now a large fissure, now a sudden descent, now the course of the little brawling stream, somewhat swelled by the rain which had fallen in the early part of the night. But all these difficulties were at length overcome, though the one said to the other that it put him in mind of the Pass of Roncesvalles, and the other replied, "As much like Roncesvalles, my good friend, as a Cheshire cheese is to the Peak of Derby. But, pray recollect your taciturnity; it will not do to break out now. There is the boat, I see;" and, advancing over the sand, he spoke a few words to one of the men who was awake, who replied with the common and significant answer, made by Englishmen on so many different occasions, of "All's right, sir."

The other man, in the mean while, roused up their two companions, and the horsemen dismounted from their beasts, and put the bridles into the hand of the youth who had served them as a guide. The one who seemed to be the principal personage of the party seemed to add a piece of money to that which he placed in the lad's palm, saying, "Mind you lead them back carefully, and he will give you the same when you deliver the horse to him in good condition."

The young man thanked him warmly, and promised all manner of care. The two Cavaliers, having placed themselves in the stern of the boat, it was easily pushed off into the sea, which was there calm and tranquil; and the

sailors springing in, took to their oars, and pulled away towards the mouth of the bay.

Speedily the little boat began to show that all was not quite so smooth beyond the point—tossing up and down as they approached the open sea, and labouring with the eddies produced by the contending wind and tide among the scattered rocks which stood out from the headland. When they had once issued forth upon the bosom of the wide ocean, they found a heavy sea running, and the wind directly contrary to the course they wished to steer, so that but little way was made, notwithstanding the sturdy strokes of the rowers, and day began to dawn before they were a mile from the bay.

The first light of the morning showed them, what they had not before perceived, a small cutter lying at anchor, still at the distance of a mile and a half or two miles; and as they appeared likely to be some hours before they reached her, the one gentleman whispered to the other, "Let us give these poor fellows some relief, Barecolt. You take one oar, and I can take another, and then those who rest can relieve the other two, after a while."

"With all my heart, *mon colonel*," replied Captain Barecolt, "though this water work is neither your trade nor mine."

The proposal of Lord Beverley was soon proposed to the men, and gladly enough adopted; and still a considerable time elapsed before they reached the little cutter, which hoisted sail and put to sea as soon as they were on board.

The morning was fair, with a strong wind blowing, not the most favourable that could be conceived for the course which they were destined to pursue, but still not directly contrary, and they made their way slowly on through the dashing billows at the rate of some three or four miles in the hour. Lord Beverley and his companion Barecolt walked the deck, speaking little to each other or to the rest, and the peer keeping a watchful eye upon the loquacious captain, to make sure that he did not give way to his talkative propensities in favour of the skipper, or any of the mariners of the ship. It was evident that the two passengers were perfectly unknown to their shipmates, both from the manner in which the latter examined them when they came on board, and from the fact of Lord Beverley, whenever he did speak, conversing with Barecolt in French, and addressing the master of the vessel in broken English. The persons of the two gentlemen also were disguised, as far as mere clothing went. Barecolt, for his part, was dressed in a sober-coloured gray suit, with a bull's belt, and a black hat and feather. The whole was in very good keeping, except in respect of certain red ribands which his taste for finery could not forbear from applying to various parts of his dress; and he might have well passed for a respectable French citizen somewhat given to the juice of the grape, and not very affluent in his circumstances. The earl was habited more richly, but in a very different style from that of an English Cavalier; and although the pointed beard was still in fashion in England, he had sacrificed that ornament of the human countenance to bring himself to the likeness of certain young French nobles, who at that time were labouring zealously to exclude beards from fashionable society, and who had so far succeeded, that not long after, one of the old French court who adhered to the custom of nature at his ancestors was known by the name of "the man with the

beard." This change had made a very great difference in his appearance which he had increased by dying his hair and mustache of a darker hue, so that none but those who knew him intimately would have recognised him without very close inspection.

After sailing on for about two hours, making their way slowly from the English coast, which, however, was still seen rising in long lines above the waters, a large vessel was perceived bearing direct towards them, with all sails set, while a fleet, apparently of fishing boats, were coming up upon the other tack.

The master of the schooner seemed to pay but little attention to either; but Lord Beverley felt some anxiety and not a little impatience to ascertain the character of the large vessel, as a ship named the Good Hope, laden with ammunition, money, and stores, had been daily expected on the coast for the last fortnight, and he had been directed by the king to instruct the officers on board, if he met her in his passage, on no account to trust themselves in Hull, the governor of which had openly declared for the Parliament. The master, however, continued to walk up and down the opposite side of the deck, merely giving a casual glance to the other vessel, till the earl crossed over and inquired if he knew the ship that was approaching.

"She is a king's ship," replied the man, with a sort of dull taciturnity, which sailors sometimes affect towards landsmen, especially if they are of a different nation.

"But is it the Good Hope?" demanded the earl. "If so, I am commanded to board her."

"It looks like her," replied the captain, continuing his walk; "but we shall soon know, and then you can do as you like."

Ere many minutes were over, the captain pronounced the vessel to be the Good Hope; and as they approached somewhat nearer, a signal was made, upon which the cutter brought to, and the boat being lowered, the only one which she possessed, the earl proceeded to the other ship, taking with him our good friend Captain Barecolt rather (to use a familiar expression) to keep him out of harm's way than for the pleasure of his society.

Although signals had been made and answered, it was evident that the people on board the large vessel viewed the approach of the little boat with some suspicion, believing, as the earl found, that the object was but to detain them till some larger force arrived. There were several persons at the gangway, watching eagerly the approach of the visitors, and not a little puzzled did they appear by the appearance of the earl and his companion when the boat ran alongside. The earl looked up and smiled, for he recognised not a few of those who stood upon the deck above as personal acquaintances of his own, and faithful servants of the king.

With a slow step, however, and a grave face, he climbed the vessel's side; but when once he stood upon the deck, removed from the eyes and ears of the boatmen, he stretched out a hand to two gentlemen who stood on either side, saying, "Welcome, Pollard! Welcome, Berkeley! You have been long looked for."

"By my life! the Earl of Beverley!" cried Colonel Ashburnham, who stood beyond. "Why, const! man, who would have known you in that black wig?"

"My own hair, I assure you," replied the earl. "Do not libel it, Ashburnham; there is not a

hair on my head that is false. But I can stay only a moment, for I am bound for France, on the king's service; and I have it in command to tell you on no account to venture into Hull. Sir John Hotham holds with the Parliament, has driven the king away from his gates, and, as a new convert to treason, is likely to make a merit of any violent act. You must give me your news, however. Tell me what succour you bring to the king, and what support you find in Holland."

"To France!" said Ashburnham, thoughtfully. "I wish to Heaven you would give me a passage, Beverley; for his majesty can do without me for a time, and I can serve him better there than here. I was but now casting about in my mind which way I should get across as soon as I landed."

"That is easily done," answered the earl. "But you must make haste—I can stay for no packing: for, to say truth, I love not the look of all this fleet of boats, some of them well-nigh as big as our cutter there; and, mark you! there are two large vessels just appearing round the point."

"Well! I am with you in a moment," replied Colonel Ashburnham; "and as for news, I will tell you all as we sail along."

Thus saying, he descended for a moment to the cabin, while the earl remained upon deck, and gathered from the gentlemen who stood round the tidings that they brought from Holland. The colonel, however, was somewhat longer than Lord Beverley could have desired, as he watched with no unreasonable apprehensions the nearer approach of the boats, and the growing distinctness of three large vessels, as they came scudding along with a fair wind from the side of Hull.

"Ashburnham! Ashburnham!" he cried at length, "on my life, I can stay no longer. Every minute is full of danger."

"Here I am!" cried Colonel Ashburnham. "I have been only securing my papers," and, the moment after, he appeared upon the deck, with two large leathern bags in his hand, which were cast into the boat; and with a brief farewell to those on board, and a recommendation to make all sail, the earl descended the ship's side, followed by his friend. The sailors were ordered to pull back as fast as possible to the ship; and whispering to his new companion to forget him as the Earl of Beverley, and more to know him as a French officer with whom he had casually become acquainted, the earl introduced Barecolt to him as Captain Jersal, an officer from Brittany.

Whatever conversation they might have had, if time and opportunity had served, was cut short by the evident signs of an enemy's approach, displayed both by the boats and the ships which they had seen. Signals that the cutter did not understand, and could not answer, were made by the larger ships; and before the earl and his companion were half way from the Gool Hope to his own vessel, the former was in full sail away, and a shot was fired across the bows of the latter, as a notification to lie to.

The rowers plied their oars with all the vigour and activity which the necessity of the case required, but it was in vain. Ere they had reached the ship's side, the master had quietly hauled down his colours as sign of surrender.

"This is infamous," cried Ashburnham. "The cowardly vagabond! What's to become of us, now?"

"Faith! we must take our chance," replied the earl; "perhaps we may prevail upon him yet to make sail. At all events, I must destroy some letters I have on board; and perchance I may escape unknown, even if I be taken into Hull, for I do not think that Hotham and I ever met."

"I have no such luck," answered Ashburnham: "he knows me as an old enemy—a thing not so easily forgotten as an old friend. But I will not spoil your fortune, Beverley. Remember, we never met before, *mon colonel*; and if this good gentleman would take my advice," he added, turning to Barecolt, "he would follow the same plan, which is the only way for safety, depend upon it."

"Oh! I will be strangely ignorant," replied Barecolt; "but I thought I heard you talk of papers in those bags, sir. The sea is a more quiet place at the bottom than at the top."

"Right! Right!" cried Colonel Ashburnham. "Hand me that grappling iron, my man," he continued, speaking to one of the sailors. The man obeyed, and fastening one of the leathern bags he had brought with him to the hook of the iron, Colonel Ashburnham pitched them both into the sea together, just as the boat ran alongside of the cutter.

CHAPTER XVI.

"In the name of fury, you scoundrel," exclaimed Colonel Ashburnham, addressing the captain of the cutter as soon as they reached the deck, "what made you strike and reef the sails?"

"Because I couldn't help it," replied the man. "They are to windward of us, and will be alongside of us in no time. If you come to that, what made that gentleman stay so long—and who the devil are you, who come to give orders here?"

He added a number of oaths, which are not necessary to repeat. But Colonel Ashburnham waved his hand, saying, "Silence, sir—I thought I was known by everybody who even pretends to serve the king. I am Colonel Ashburnham, an officer in his service, and I order you, if there be a chance of getting away, to make sail instantly!"

"There is no chance," answered the man. "No, sir! not now!" said a seaman, who stood near; "for nothing is ready. If we had not reefed the sails, indeed—"

"Well, well!" said Colonel Ashburnham, "what must be, must be! Where are the Frenchmen?"

"There stands one," said the captain, sullenly, "and the other has gone down below."

"If you have any thing to destroy, sir," said the colonel, addressing Barecolt in French, "you had better go and do it at once."

"I have nothing on earth, sir," replied Barecolt, "but a score or two of crowns, a gray doublet, and two shirts—all of which I would sooner destroy on shore than on the water, at any time. I have a grand objection to that element in every shape and in every quantity, from a jugful to the Atlantic."

"Your nose vouches for your truth," replied Ashburnham, with a low bow; for he was a man who, notwithstanding the sterner and more devoted points of his character, could understand and appreciate a joke.

"You say right, colonel," replied Barecolt, laying his hand upon his proboscis. "An boat-

est man never fears to bear a witness of his actions about with him."

"Hast you not better," said Ashburnham, in a lower tone, "go down and see if you can help your companion?"

"With all my heart," answered B. recolt; "though I think what he is about he can do without help; but I will go and tell him that the big black monster there is coming up more like a swallow than a whale, and that may hasten his proceedings."

Thus saying, he descended into the cabin, but speedily returned, laughing, and saying in broken English, "He is mortally seasick, poor miserable! I thought he would be so in the boat."

"Ay! it is the motion of the ship, lying to," replied Ashburnham, aloud; "but, on my life, this is a bad affair for me. You two gentlemen, I dare say, they will let go as strangers; but I am, unfortunately, too well known. Here they come, however, and we shall soon know the worst."

A moment after the headmost ship of the enemy brought to, and while the others sailed on after the Good Hope, a boat was immediately despatched to take possession of the cutter, and the deck was crowded in a few minutes with seamen from Hull.

The leader of the party recognised Colonel Ashburnham at once, and laughed when he saw him, exclaiming, "Ha, ha! we have got something for our chase, however! Who is there on board besides, colonel?"

"I really cannot tell, sir," answered Colonel Ashburnham, gravely; "I have just got into this unfortunate vessel from the other ship, and know nothing of anybody on board but that fellow," and he pointed to the captain, "who is evidently one of three things."

"What, sir?" exclaimed the captain, looking at him fiercely.

"Fool, coward, or traitor!" exclaimed Colonel Ashburnham, calmly.

The man sprang towards him, but the officer of the boat interposed, exclaiming, "Peace, peace! No quarrelling among prisoners! Run down, run down, some of you, and see who is below. Bring up all the papers, too, and then put about the ship for Hull."

The men bustled about for a minute or two, executing these orders, till at length one of them returned up the ladder, carrying some papers in his hand, and another followed, bearing the portmanteau of Lord Beverley, and a small leathern pouch or wallet, containing the worldly goods and chattels of worthy Captain Barecolt. Colonel Ashburnham's baggage was upon the deck, and with very summary haste the crew of the Parliamentary ship proceeded to examine the contents of the whole, while Barecolt poured forth a multitude of French lamentations over what, he appeared to think, was preliminary to the plunder of his property.

"There, hold your howling!" cried the officer of the boat. "Nobody is going to take any thing, unless it be the papers."

"I have no papers!" cried Barecolt, in broken English, "except that brown paper round about my crowns; give me the silver and take the brown paper, if you like."

"There, monsieur! take your crowns, paper, and all," cried the officer, handing them to him.

"We are no robbers in this country. Did you find any one below?" he continued, addressing the man who brought the portmanteau.

"Nobody but another poor French lubber, lying upon the floor as sick as a cat," answered the sailor. "I shook him by the shoulder, and told him to come up, but I believe he would let me throw him overboard sooner than budge."

"Ay! let him stay—let him stay!" answered the officer. "I will go down and see him in a minute. What's in that leather case?"

"Nothing but my clothes, writing materials, and a trifle of money," replied Colonel Ashburnham; "and if you wish to examine it, I will beg you to use the key rather than that marling-spike, for I don't know whether the smiths are good in Hull. Here is the key."

While all these operations were going on, the boat's crew had been busily engaged in navigating the ship towards Hull, and the vessel to which she had struck, seeing the prize secure, made sail to assist in the chase of the Good Hope.

Although the wind was not very favourable, it was sufficiently so to bring them into the port of Hull just as night was beginning to fall, and in a few minutes the deck was crowded with officers of the garrison and a party of the trainbands of the city—the only force, indeed, which the Parliament had prepared for its defence. Colonel Ashburnham, whose name was soon noised about, became an object of general attention, and much less notice was taken of good Captain Barecolt than that worthy gentleman imagined he deserved. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that the rabble of Hull neither knew him nor the many wonderful achievements which he had performed, and that it was as well, occasionally, to divest one's self of a portion of one's glory, in order to escape from too close observation.

Lord Beverley passed with as little attention; and an officer who was sent to state the case to the governor, reported first, that the famous Colonel Ashburnham was among the prisoners, but that the other two were Frenchmen, apparently of no great importance, and one of them so sick that he could scarcely stand.

"Bring Colonel Ashburnham before me immediately," replied the governor, "and the Frenchman who is well. He can give us tidings of himself, and his companion too, most likely. Put the other one in the block-house we strengthened yesterday till he is well enough to speak for himself. Let him have whatever is necessary for him, and mind to keep a sure guard over him."

The orders were immediately obeyed; and while Lord Beverley, pretending to be still very ill from the effects of his voyage, was carried, rather than led, to a block-house which had been fortified near the water-gate of the city, Colonel Ashburnham and the magnanimous Captain Barecolt were marched up to the residence of the governor, and speedily introduced to his presence.

Of Sir John Hotham himself we cannot give a better account, and, in all probability, should give a much worse one, than that which has been furnished by the celebrated historian of the great rebellion:

"Hotham," says Lord Clarendon, with those remarkable powers of delineating human character which probably Theophrastus himself possessed in a very inferior degree, "was by his nature and education a rough and rude man, of great covetousness, of great pride, and great ambition without any bowels of good nature, or the least sense or touch of generosity. His parts were no

quick and sharp, but composed, and he judged well. He was a man of craft, and more like to deceive than to be cozened."

Such was the man, according to Lord Clarendon's account, before whom Colonel Ashburnham was now brought; and, as he had said to the Earl of Beverley, there was some enmity existing between the family of Hotham and himself, so that he might well expect to be treated with very scanty ceremony and kindness. Nevertheless, to his surprise, he was received with a good-natured air and a shake of the hand, Hotham exclaiming,

"Welcome, colonel, welcome! though, to say the truth, I wish to heaven you had not put yourself in the way of our ships, or that the people had let you go!"

"The latter unfortunate case can soon be remedied, Sir John," said Colonel Ashburnham, "by your doing what they left undone, and letting me go myself."

"I fear not, colonel—I fear not," replied Hotham. "We have got some great rogues here," he added, in a lower tone, "who look after me more sharply than I look after them! otherwise I would let you go at once, upon my honour, and will do it yet if I can."

"Well, I thank you, Sir John, for the intention, at all events," replied Ashburnham; "and it is the more gratifying to me, as I always had a regard for you, notwithstanding my quarrel with your son, which you took up so warmly at one time."

"Ah, the knave!" said Hotham; "I have found him out since that time; and now he has come down here to act as spy and controller against his own father. But who have you got there? Is he one of your people?"

"Oh no!" answered Ashburnham; "some poor devil of a Frenchman, seeking service, I believe. I found him and another in that cursed cutter, when I was fool enough to go aboard. The other has been dead sick all the way; but I know nothing of them, for we were taken almost immediately after I got into her:" and he proceeded to explain that he had been returning to England in the Good Hope, but judging, from what he heard, the time not yet quite propitious for his reappearance, he had sought to make his way back to France or Holland in the vessel in which he was taken.

"Well, well," said Hotham, "I will lodge you as well as I can, and get you out of the scrape as soon as I can; but keep out of my son's way, for he is a vast rogue, and very ill affected to the king. Now I'll see what this fellow has to say for himself. Come hither, sir."

By a rapid and dexterous change of look, Barecolt contrived to make it appear that he did not at first understand the governor's words, but comprehended the sign to approach by which they were followed, and advancing, with a low bow, laid his hand upon his heart, and then stood upright before Hotham, in what he considered a graceful attitude.

"A tall fellow," said Hotham, turning to Colonel Ashburnham. "Pray, who may you be, sir?"

"I be von Capitaine Jersval," replied Barecolt, with a low bow; "von French gentleman who seek to distinguish herself by serving anybody."

"A laudable and elastic ambition," said Ashburnham, turning away.

"By serving anybody," said Hotham; "pray, Captain Jersval, who would you like to serve best?"

"It be to me von matter of de grandest indifference," replied Barecolt, "so dat de pay and de glory be de same on both side."

"That's as it may be," answered Hotham; "but the truth is, I want some good serviceable officers to help in strengthening the fortifications."

"I am de man dat can do it," was Barecolt's reply. "I have strengthen many fortification in my time, among de rest Rochelle. But I must know, monsieur, if dat de pay and de glory be equal; for I come here to offer service to de king, and not finding her majesty where I sought, and my money going very fast in dis sacre dear land of England, where de wine and de meat is all sold at de weight of gold, and vat you call *dum* tough too, I tink to go back again, when your great black sheep catch me, and bring me here, pardie!"

Ashburnham could not stand it any longer, but turned to a window and laughed outright. Hotham, however, continued gravely to interrogate Captain Barecolt in regard to the plans and purposes which brought him to England; and having satisfied himself completely that he was one of those adventurous soldiers, of whom great numbers were at that time wandering about Europe, taking service wherever they could find it, he determined to put his skill to a test before he tried his honesty. Sending for pen, ink, and paper, together with compasses and a ruler, he directed Captain Barecolt to draw him out a plan of any little fortification he thought fit; but Barecolt, who, to tell the truth, had not altogether misused his advantages, and might have become almost as great a man as he fancied himself if it had not been for his swaggering, drinking, drabbing, and lying propensities, instantly exclaimed,

"Ah, c'n vous verrez—you must see in von meenute;" and, taking the compasses dexterously in hand, he proportioned off curtains and bastions, and half-moons, and horn-works, and redoubts, and glacis, and ditches, and salient angles, and every sort of defence that could be applied to the protection of a town, with a rapidity that somewhat astounded the slow comprehension of Hotham, who soon became convinced that he had got one of the first engineers in Europe within the walls of Hull. His exclamation of surprise called Ashburnham to the table, who, looking over his shoulder, and very willing to do Barecolt a good turn, exclaimed,

"Upon my soul, the Frenchman seems to understand what he's about!"

"Monsieur, you do flatter me," replied Barecolt, with another low bow. "I be one poor insignificant man, who have certainly been employed in de great enterprise, and have pick up some little what you call spattering of de science, but I cannot be compared to many man."

Hotham, however, was completely taken in; and although he puzzled his head in vain to recall the name of Captain Jersval among the great men of Europe, yet he thought that at the least it was well worth his while to engage him in strengthening the defences of Hull, and withholding him from the service of the king (till such time as the Parliament should determine whether they would take him regularly into their employment or not).

It must not be understood, however, that I mean to imply that Hotham was in any degree sincerely attached to the Parliamentary party, or wished, or even expected that it would be

ultimately successful against the king. But in all troublous times there are a multitude of waverers, some from weakness, some from ambition, hanging on the outskirts of a party, lending it inefficient help, and generally falling in the end, as he did, by their own indecision. Those who are moved by ambition, like Hotham, ordinarily hope to wring from the party to which they wish success, that advancement which they could not otherwise obtain, by giving some countenance to the enemy, and not unfrequently meet with the just reward of such conduct by being neglected or punished, when those they have aided against their conscience, for their own purposes, have obtained a preponderance, by the support of themselves and others like them. Hotham, however, wishing to make himself of importance, and sell his services dear to the king, was very well inclined to gather round him men that might make him formidable; and, consequently, after some little deliberation, he turned to Barecolt, saying,

"Well, Captain Jersval, I think I can get you good service if you like; but, before I can say any thing positive, I must apply to the higher powers. In the mean time, however, if you like it, I will employ you upon the fortifications here, at fifteen shillings a day."

"And my victual?" said Barecolt.

"Well," replied Hotham, "I can't exactly give you a place at my own table, but you shall have a billet upon any victualler in the town you like, and an order for your supply, chargeable upon the government."

Barecolt again bowed low, saying,

"Monsieur, I am your most devoted. You will inspect de work every day, and vat you say shall not bind you, unless you like vat be done. I am quite sure of de great success. Den, if de higher power say ve vill not have Captain Jersval, goot—you can pull off your hat and say, Mon Capitaine, goot morning; and I shall be free to go where I like. Dat is but all fair, I tink."

"Quite—quite," answered Hotham, "and so we will leave it, captain. I will go into the anieroom for a moment, to direct the order to be made out, and to-morrow morning, if you will be with me by six, we will walk round the ramparts."

"Sir, you treat me very polished," answered Barecolt, with another profound bow; and Hotham retired for an instant into the next room.

Ashburnham immediately advanced a step towards Barecolt, fixing his eyes keenly upon him,

"And pray sir," he demanded, "do you really intend to go over to the Parliament, after having, as I understand, served his majesty?"

"I have taken the king's money, colonel," answered Barecolt, "but every one has a right to get out of a scrape as he can."

"I think I understand you," answered Ashburnham, "and if so, God speed you: if not, cee day you will repent it."

"There are laws among soldiers, colonel," answered Barecolt, "which are never violated by men of honour. But there is no law against cozening a captor. It be quite true," he continued, at once resuming his jargon on the re-appearance of Hotham at the door, "I know nothing about de parties here; it make no difference to me which be right and which be wrong; all I know is, dat party dat pay me be right, and very right too, as dey will find when dey see what I will do."

The conference did not last much longer: Hotham gave the billet and the order to Barecolt, and then placed him in the hands of a captain of the train-bands, to guide him about the town, as he said, and to see that he had every thing he needed, but as much to keep a certain degree of watchfulness over his proceedings as any thing else; and this being done, he let him go. Colonel Ashburnham was placed under stricter guard, but yet treated courteously and well, and orders were given to let the governor know as soon as the other Frenchman should be sufficiently recovered to be brought before him.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN BARECOLT and his guide now issued forth into the streets of Hull, and sauntered on for a few steps without speaking. An English town, in those days, especially after the sun was set, presented a very different aspect from that which it offers to the night-wanderer at present. All was darkness and gloom, except where, from an open door or unshuttered window, the lights which the people within were using for their own advantage, served also for the benefit of the passenger; and, indeed, every one who had occasion to traverse the streets generally furnished himself with a lantern or link, to prevent him from running his head against a post, or breaking his neck down some of the steep flights of steps by which the even course of progression was not unfrequently interrupted.

"Now, Master Captain," said Barecolt's companion, "what inn do you want to go to? for it won't be pleasant roving about Hull after dark."

"Dat is de ting vich I don't know," answered Barecolt; "I never have been in Hull before."

"Then one inn is as good as another to you, Captain Chairsfall," replied the officer of the train-bands.

"No, no, no," replied Barecolt, "dat be not just, monsieur; all inn be not de same—it depend on what be in dem. I must have de good wine, de good bed, de good meat."

"Well, you can have all those at the Lion, or at the Rose either," replied his companion.

"Ah, no; I like to see," answered Barecolt; "we will just walk through de town, take a leetle peep at dis inn, and a leetle peep at dat, and perhaps I take a glass of vine here, and a glass of vino dere, and give you anoder, *mon ami*, just to try which be de best. You see my nose, have you not? Well, it know what good vine be."

"It looks it," answered the other, for that nose was one which few men could let alone, such were its attractions. "However, if we are to have this long walk, I must get a lantern at my house;" and on he went, down the street before him, till, turning to the left, he entered another, in which not only was his own house situated, but also the identical inn called the Swan. The door was open; a light was shining within; the swan, in all its glory, was swinging from a pole over the door; and Barecolt insinuated a desire to begin their perquisitions there.

The captain of the train-bands, there is every reason to suspect, had a friend at the Lion and another at the Rose, for he certainly did not do justice to Mrs. White in the account he gave of

the accommodations of her house. But Barecoll, who thought that good or bad, he never could have a gill of wine too much, and who had not tasted any thing stronger than water for a greater length of time than was at all convenient to his stomach, was resolute to try what the Swan could produce, and, consequently, led the way up the steps and into the house, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the worthy predecessor of John Gilpin.

Advancing with an easy and self-satisfied air to the little room which we have spoken of, the window of which commanded the passage and the staircase, he found the worthy landlady herself seated with a tall, powerful man, considerably above the middle age, but still hale and hearty—with white hair, indeed, but thick eyebrows, still jet black, and long, dark eyelashes shading an eye of that peculiar blue, which is seldom found without a rich stream of the Milesian blood flowing in the veins of the owner. A jug of ale and some cold ham was between the two, and Mrs. White seemed to be doing the honours of her house to the stranger with great courtesy and attention.

"Would you have de bounny, madame," said Barecoll, "just to let me have von leetle gill, as you call it, of de very best vine, and anoder of de same for my friend here?"

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. White. "Ah, Captain Jenkins, is that you? Well, I am very glad to see you in the house at last. A dull night, sir—Nancy, Nancy, give these gentlemen two gills of the best wine. White or red, sir?"

"Oh, vite, vite," replied Captain Barecoll; "de red vine in England be vort noting."

"White, Nancy, white," cried the landlady. "Won't you come in, and take a seat, Mr. Jenkins? Here's Mr. O'Donnell with me, whom you know, I think."

Captain Jenkins, however, of the train-bands of the city of Hull, grumbled something about not being able to stay long; but the more gallant Barecoll, instantly accepting the lady's invitation, walked in, and the other followed.

The two measures of wine were speedily set before them, and Barecoll, tossing off his in a moment, seemed to like it so well that he called for another. But Captain Jenkins shrugged his shoulders, and whispered that there was very much better at the Lion; "very much better, indeed!"

What effect this insinuation would have had upon the determinations of Barecoll, I cannot take upon myself to say; but an event occurred at that moment which at once decided his conduct. Just as Nancy was placing the second gill before him, a loud noise of people speaking, and apparently scuffling in the street, was heard; it gradually grew louder, and at length seemed to reach the steps leading up to the house.

There was something in the tone of one of the voices which, though raised into accents such as Barecoll had never heard it use, seemed to him familiar to his ear, and he instantly started up to look out.

"It's nothing but some drunken men, sir," said Mrs. White; "if they don't mind, the watch will get hold of them."

But the watch had already done its function; and the moment after, the voice of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was distinctly heard, exclaiming, "Get hence, ye men of Belial, ye false witnesses raised up by Jazabel, whose blood the dogs lied, to testify falsely of the just Naboth. Drunk!"

It is you are drunk! I never was so sober in my life. Get hence, I say," he continued, with a loud hiccough; "I lodge here, I tell you;" and, shaking off the hands of two of the watch who had him in custody, he rushed into the Swan, and had nearly reached the foot of the stairs, when he fell prone upon the well-washed floor, and lay there, unable to raise himself.

Mrs. White instantly rushed out, followed close by Nancy, to the rescue of her guest; for the watch had by this time entered, and were about to lay hands once more upon the person of Mr. Ezekiel Dry. The good landlady, however, easily satisfied them that Mr. Dry would be taken care of, and not suffered farther to disturb the peace of the town; and as he was by no means in a comfortable or convenient position on the floor—which, from the undulatory motion he perceived in it, he asserted loudly was affected by an earthquake—the two men who had followed him were employed to raise him, and conveyed him, struggling violently, to his bed.

By no means unaccustomed to the treatment of such maladies, Mrs. White remained for a few minutes with her reverend and respectable guest, and then leaving him, as we shall do for the present, returned to her little parlour.

"Madame," said Barecoll, as soon as she entered, "your vine be so very good, dat I shall remain here vile I stay in de town. Here is von leetle billet from the governor; and as I know dat it is not pleasant to lodge de soldier, or de officer eider, here be one order for my provision and maintenance, vich will be paid at de good rate; and as I like de good vine, it may be something in your way."

Mrs. White could only courtesy and submit; but Captain Jenkins, who had hoped to put a good thing in the paws of the Lion or in the bosom of the Rose, flung out of the house in a fit of disgust, saying he would come for Captain Chairsfall early the next morning. Before he went, however, he called Mrs. White aside, and whispered to her to keep a sharp eye upon her new guest.

"If you find him inquiring his way out of the town, or going out late at night or early in the morning," he said, with an important air, "you must send word either to me or to the governor—it's all the same which; for he is a Frenchman who has come over to serve the king, in rebellion to the Parliament, and has been taken prisoner. He pretends now to be willing to go with us, but I have doubts, many doubts, Mrs. White; so look to him, look to him well, if you would merit favour."

Mrs. White promised to look to him, and inwardly proposed to have a due regard for her own pocket, by obtaining speedy payment for every thing she supplied; and as for the rest, "to let the man take his chance," as she termed it. I cannot, however, aver that Mrs. White was either prepossessed by the appearance of the worthy Captain Barecoll, or by the account given of him by Captain Jenkins; though, to say truth, she did not put much faith in the assurance of the officer of the trained bands.

That her new lodger had come to serve the king, however, and then showed a good will to serve his enemies, seemed clear; so that, when she returned to her parlour after her conference with Jenkins, though she was perfectly civil to the apparent Frenchman—as, indeed, she was to every one—it was of that quick and sharp-set civility which can be felt better than described.

She answered all his questions in as few words as possible, interspersing them with numerous courtesies and very civil epithets; but it was very evident to Captain Barecolt that Mrs. White wished for as little of his company as possible. He was not a man, as may be imagined, who would attribute this distaste to his society to any want of personal attractions, and he settled it in his own mind that it must be his assumed quality of Frenchman that prejudiced the landlady against him, and that evil he determined to remedy as soon as he was sure of his ground; for Captain Barecolt, at that moment, had as strong a desire for the private company of Mrs. White as she had for his absence. Mr. Hugh O'Donnell still kept his seat at the table too, and he looked at Mrs. White, and Mrs. White at Mr. O'Donnell, with very significant glances, and no less significant silence, till at length Captain Barecolt's impudence fairly gave way, and saying to himself, "Hang the fellow! I must wait till he chooses to go," he rose, inquiring, "Can anybody show me the room that I am to sleep in? for I like very great to see de bed where I lie."

"Oh, yes, sir," cried Mrs. White, "you shall have as good a bed as any in Hull. Here, Nancy! Nancy!" and, preceded by the girl, the worthy captain was led up stairs, and shown into a bedroom just opposite to that of Arrah Neil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

At the door of Captain Barecolt's room, Nancy put the candle in his hand, and made him a low courtesy, which might be partly in answer to various civil speeches which the worthy and respectable gentleman had addressed to her as they went up stairs, partly as a hint that she did not intend to go any farther in his company; for, to say the truth, the nose of the tall captain was not at all prepossessing in Nancy's eyes.

"I want to speak de leetle word wid you, my dear," said Captain Barecolt, taking the candle.

But the girl, however, only dropped him another courtesy, replying,

"Well, sir, what is it? Pray be quick, for missis will want me."

"Tell me, my dear," said Barecolt, lowering his voice, "what be dat gentleman dat I see come in just now? he who ware what you call terpsy?"

"Oh, he is a lodger, sir," replied Nancy, turning round to go away.

"Stop, stop," said Barecolt; "answer me de other leetle word. Have he got one young lady wid him?"

"Yes, sir—no more," replied Nancy.

"And in dis house?" asked Captain Barecolt.

"Yes, sir," rejoined the girl, again, "just in there; he locks the door upon her, the old vermin," she added, not at all approving such an abridgment of female liberty, and looking upon Mr. Dry as but little better than a Turk in the garb of a Calvinist.

"Ah, he be de monstrous big rogue," replied Barecolt. "I thought I see him before; I know him, Nancee, I know him well for one extravagant zrent tief."

"He is not very extravagant here," answered the maid; "but I must go, sir, upon my word;" and, whisking round, she descended the stairs,

at the foot of which her mistress called her into the little parlour, and inquired what that man had been saying to her.

"Oh, he was asking about the gentleman in the chamberlain, ma'am," was Nancy's reply; "and he says he is an extravagant big thief—that he has seen him before, and knows him."

Mrs. White looked at Mr. O'Donnell, and Mr. O'Donnell at Mrs. White, and then the landlady murmured, "He is not far wrong, I fancy;" to which Mr. O'Donnell assented by a nod.

In the mean while Captain Barecolt entered his bed-chamber, set down the candle, and stretched his long limbs upon a chair, after which he fell into a fit of thought, not gloomy, but profound. He was a man who loved adventures, as the reader is aware, and he saw a wonderful provision of them before him, in which he hoped and expected to have an opportunity of developing many of those vast and important qualities which he attributed to himself—wit, courage, cunning, presence of mind, dexterity of action, together with his wonderful powers of strategy, were all likely to have full means of displaying themselves in the twofold enterprise of delivering Arrah Neil from the hands of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, and Lord Beverley from the clutches of Sir John Hotham. He was well contented with what he had done already. To have cheated a governor of Hull; to have obtained his liberty in five minutes; to have passed for a Frenchman; to have cast off the companionship of the embarrassing Mr. Jenkins, were feats of no light merit in his eyes; and he now proposed to go on, step by step, till he had reached the climax of accomplishment; first using art, then daring, and crowning the whole by some brilliant display of courage, which would immortalize him in the eyes of the Royalist party.

After he had thus continued to think for about a quarter of an hour, and had arrived at the point of doubting whether he was in fact Julius Cæsar or Alexander the Great, with some slight suspicion that he might be neither, but Henry IV. of France instead, he opened the door quietly, and, without taking the candle, advanced to the head of the stairs, where, bending down his head, he listened for a moment. There was a dull, heavy sound of people talking, however; and a man's voice was heard, though the words he used could not be distinguished.

"Ay, that d—d fellow is there still," murmured Captain Barecolt; "if he does not go soon, I'll walk down and cut his throat;" but, just as he was turning to go back to his own room, he heard the door of the little parlour—which, as it closed with a pulley and a weight, announced its movement by a prodigious rattle—give indications of its being opened, and the voice of Mr. O'Donnell could be distinguished, as he marched out, saying,

"The first thing to be done, however, Mrs. White, is to get her out of this man's hands."

Captain Barecolt waited till the Irishman's footsteps sounded no longer in the hall, and then walking down stairs, proceeded straight into the little parlour, and, much to the astonishment of Mrs. White, seated himself before her, saying, in good plain English,

"I think so too, Mrs. White."

"Lord, sir, what do you mean?" asked the worthy landlady.

"I mean, 'the first thing is to get her out of this man's hands,' Mrs. White; so now let me

have some supper, and I will tell you all about it."

"Dear me, sir! Why this is very funny," replied the landlady, with an agitated smoothing of the table-cloth, and a tremulous arranging of her jugs and plates; "I didn't know that any one would do what the gentleman said."

"But I did though, Mrs. White," replied Barecolt; "loud words will always catch long ears."

"Why, lord, sir, you speak as good English as I do," said Mrs. White.

"To be sure I do," answered Barecolt; "I should be a fool if I didn't. But now, my good lady, tell me if I can trust you; for, although my own life is a thing that I care nothing about, and is risked every day wherever it can be risked by shot and steel, in the breach and in the field, there is much more to be perilled by anything like rashness than such a trifle as that. There's this young lady's safety and liberty, and I can tell you that there are a great many very high people who would give no light reward to those who will set her free from this base captivity who has got her."

"Dear me," cried Mrs. White, "I wish I had known that before, for here have we been talking of nothing else for the last hour, Mr. O'Donnell and I. Do you know who she is, sir?"

"I know more than I choose to say, Mrs. White," replied Barecolt, who had made it the first principle of his life, from soft childhood to tubercular maturity, never to confess ignorance of anything, and who had frequently made a significant nod or a wise look pass for a whole volume of information; "but what I ask you is, can I trust you, Mrs. White? can I trust to your zeal, fidelity, and discretion? as the Duke of Montmorency asked me when he was about to take arms for the deliverance of France from the tyranny of Richelieu. I made him a low bow, Mrs. White, laid my hand upon my heart, and said, 'Perfectly, monseigneur;' and if he had taken my advice, he would have now had a lead upon his shoulders."

"Lord have mercy," exclaimed Mrs. White, empowered with the grand and tragic ideas which her strange guest presented to her imagination. "Oh, dear me, yes, sir; you can trust me perfectly, I assure you. I would risk my house and every thing, rather than not set the poor dear girl free from that nasty old Puritanical creature. Why, this was the very first cause she came to after she came over from Ireland, though Mr. O'Donnell says they went to Holland first to escape suspicion. Ay, and here her poor mother died."

"Indeed!" said Captain Barecolt, drinking in all the tidings that he heard; "I did not know that this was the house, Mrs. White. However, am glad to hear it; a very good house it is, and capital wine. You must know, then, Mrs. White, since I can trust you fully, that I came to Hull for the express purpose of setting this young lady free, and restoring her to her friends, Mr. Walton and his sister." The worthy captain, as the reader will perceive, was never at a loss for a lie, and, indeed, the habit of telling the exact truth had been so long abandoned, if ever was possessed, that the worthy professor of the word might have found no slight difficulty in pointing every shade of falsehood which his fertile imagination was continually offering him to embellish his various narratives withal. He had no particular object in deceiving Mrs. White

in regard to the real mode, manner, and object of his visit to Hull; but it was his general practice to begin by telling the lie first, and leaving the truth as a sort of strong corps of reserve to fall back upon in case of need.

"Dear me, sir," cried Mrs. White, "why, Mr. Jenkins told me that you were a Frenchman, who had come over to serve our poor good king against these Parliamentary folks; that you had been taken prisoner, and now offer to serve the Parliament."

"All a lie, all a lie, Mrs. White," replied Captain Barecolt; "it is wonderful what lies people will tell when it is quite as easy to speak the truth. However, in saying I was a Frenchman, he knew no better, poor silly man, for I pretended to be so, in order to carry on my schemes the better. But, as I see you are true to the royal cause, I will let you know that I am an officer in the king's service, and have no intention whatever of being any thing else. Neither must you suppose, Mrs. White, that I come here as a spy; for, although I hold that, upon certain occasions, the office of spy may become honourable, yet it is not one that I would willingly till; so now, Mrs. White, as I said before, let me have some supper, and then tell me what is to be done for the deliverance of this young lady?"

Captain Barecolt had risen wonderfully in the estimation of Mrs. White within the last five minutes; and such is the effect of our mental affections upon our corporeal faculties, that she began to think him by no means so ugly a man as he had at first appeared; his nose reduced itself into very tolerable and seemingly proportions in her eyes; the redness thereof became nothing more than a pleasant glow; and his tall figure and somewhat long, ungainly limbs acquired an air of dignity and command which Mrs. White thought very striking.

Bustling about, then, she prepared to supply him with the comfortable things of this life with great good will, and was struck with considerable admiration at the vigour and pertinacity with which he assailed the viands placed before him. She was obliged, indeed, to call to Nancy to bring a fresh supply. But Captain Barecolt made a significant sign by laying his finger on the side of his nose, which organ might be considered, indeed, as a sort of telegraph erected by nature with a view to such signals; and he afterward reminded her, in a low voice, that his incognito must be kept up with all others but herself.

"You are the only confidant I shall make in the town of Hull," he added; "one confederate is quite sufficient for a man of genius, and to everybody else I am the same Capitaine Jersval dat came over from France to help de king, but be now villing to help de Parliament."

"Lawk, sir, how well you do it," cried the landlady; "but I think you are very right not to tell any one but me, for they are a sad, prying, gossiping race in the town of Hull, and you might soon have your secret blown all over the place. But as to poor Miss Arrah, sir, I really do not know what is to be done. I can see very well that Mr. O'Donnell knows more about her than he chooses to say, and I can find that it was through him that the poor lady, her mother, held her communications with Ireland. He won't tell me who she is though, or what was her father's name, or her mother's either, though I tried to pump him as hard as I could. Perhaps you, sir, may be able to tell me."

"There is such a thing as discretion, Mrs. White," said Captain Barecolt, with a sagacious air; but, suspecting that Mrs. White had some doubts regarding him and his knowledge of Arrah, and was only trying to ascertain how far his information respecting her really extended, he added, "I suppose the young lady is in bed by this time; but I should be glad, Mrs. White, if you would take the first opportunity of telling her that one of the gentlemen who accompanied Lord Walton from Bishop's Merton is now in Hull, and will not quit the place without setting her free."

"Oh, bless you, sir, I dare say she is not in bed," answered Mrs. White, "and if she be, I should not mind waking her to tell her such good news as that: I'll go directly," she continued, shaking her bunch of keys significantly. "The old hunk looks the door and takes away the key, and then gys as drunk as a beast, so that she might starve for that matter; but I can always get in, notwithstanding."

"Ay, ay," answered Barecolt, "a landlady is nothing without her passkey, so run and make use of it, there's a dear woman; and if the young lady's up, I will go and see her now; if she is not, it must be to-morrow morning."

Mrs. White was absent for about five minutes, during which time Captain Barecolt continued his attack upon the cold beef, so that by the time the worthy landlady returned, the vast sirloin looked as if a mammoth had been feeding on it.

"Oh, dear, sir," cried Mrs. White, "she is so glad to hear that you are here! and she would fain get up and go away with you this very night; but I told her that couldn't be, for the gates are closed and locked."

"Locks are nothing to me, Mrs. White," replied the captain, with a sublime look, "and gates disappear before my hand as if they were made of pasteboard. Did I not, with a single petard, blow open the Porte Nantaise of Ancona, which weighed three tons weight, and took two men to move it on its hinges?"

"Lord ha! mercy, sir," exclaimed Mrs. White; "why, you are as bad as Sampson."

"A great deal worse," replied the captain; "but, however, I could not go to-night, for there's other business to be done first."

"Oh, ay, yes, sir," she said, "to get the papers; for I do not know whether you are aware that that old Punitanical wretch has got all the papers and things out of poor Sarpeant Neil's cottage. At least we think so, and I don't doubt in the least that all about poor Miss Arrah is to be found there."

"Nor I either," answered Barecolt, "nor I either, Mrs. White; but can I see the young lady to-night, or must I wait for to-morrow?"

"She will be up in a few minutes, sir," answered the worthy landlady. "She would not hear of waiting, though I told her I could easily get the old men out of the way to-morrow, by sending him a wild goose chase after Hugh O'Donnel."

"Well, then," said Barecolt, "you go and see when she is ready, and, in the mean time, I'll finish my supper."

of the garrison, standing beside the Earl of Bererley, to whom we must now return, as he is on the floor of the little cabin, affecting to be still suffering from sickness. "You must get up and come with me, for we've got a lodge prepared for you hard by here."

The earl pretended scarcely to understand him, and made some answer in broken English, which, though it was not quite so well adapted as the jargon of Captain Barecolt, was sufficiently like the language of a foreigner to keep up the character he had taken upon himself.

"Come, come, you must get up," reiterated the officer, taking him by the arm; and, being apparently loebly, the earl arose, and suffered the other to lead him upon deck. It was by this time dark, but several persons with lanterns in their hands were waiting at the mouth of the hatchway; and guarded and lighted by them, the earl was led from the vessel into the town, and thence to a small building near the city wall, pierced for musketry, and having a little platform at the top, on which was mounted a single cannon. On the side next to the town appeared a door and three windows, and behind the block-house, as it was termed, a sentinel was already marching up and down, in expectation of the arrival of the prisoner, but it was with some difficulty that the door was opened to permit entrance to the party which now approached. The aspect of the place to which the earl was to be consigned was certainly not very inviting, especially when by the light of lanterns in the night; and the inner room, to which the guard led him, afforded but little means of rendering himself comfortable within those damp and narrow walls. A bed was there, a table, and a chair, but nothing else; and Lord Bererley, still maintaining his character, made various exclamations in French upon the treatment which the people of Hull thought fit to subject an officer and a gentleman.

"You shall have some meat and beer presently," replied the officer, who understood a few words of the language the prisoner spoke, "as to a fire, mounseer, that you can't have, because there is no fireplace, you see."

The earl shrugged his shoulders with a look of discontent, but prepared to make the best of his situation; and as soon as the meat and beer which they had promised was brought, the key turned in the lock, and he was left alone, he was down by the light of the lantern with which they had provided him, to meditate over his present condition and his future plans, with the peculiar turn of mind which we have attempted to depict in some of the preceding pages.

"This is not a pleasant consummation," he said to himself, "either as regards the king's service or my safety. However, out of the cloud comes lightning, from the depths of night bursts forth the sun, all bright things are preceded by darkness, and the shadow that is upon me may give place to light. Even here, perhaps I may be enabled to do more for the cause I have undertaken than if I had reached France. It must be tried, at all events. There is boldness, like boldness, though one cannot well be bold within these walls;" and he glanced his eye over the narrow space in which he was confined, thinking, with a somewhat sad smile, that there was but little room for the exercise of all of those energies which may be called the life of life.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Come, sir, you must get up," said an officer

It is a sad thing, imprisonment," he thought. "The active being lies dead, and it is but clay that lives. Vain every great design, vain every intention and every effort, idle all ambition, empty every aspiration here! Cut from all objects on which to exercise the powers of mind or body, the patriot and the traitor philosopher and the fool are equal. No," continued, after a moment's pause, "No, not Truth and honour are happiness even in a dungeon, and the grasp of intellect and imagination reach beyond these walls, and bring in the narrow limits of the prison materials and mighty fabrics that the power of tyrants and enemies cannot overthrow. Did not Galileo stand upon the stones that surrounded him bright as of the immortal spirit? Did he not in the cell wander by the powers of mind through the glorious works of the Almighty, and tribes, even in chains, over the impotent malice of mankind? So may I too; but my first contention must be of things more immediate. Shall I deal with this man Hotham? I do think he would know me, disguised as I am: shall I attempt still to pass for a Frenchman? If I do, perhaps I doom myself to long imprisonment—I wonder where my companion is, and Ashburnham! 'Tis strange they are not placed in the same prison with myself. Heaven they have farel better; for, though I say the more the merrier, yet I could not wish any one to share such a lodging as I hope and trust that fellow Barecolt will guard upon his tongue. Well said the rowling king that it was an unruly member, never did I know head in which it was less governed. He would not betray me, I do love, but yet in his babble he may do me mischief than a less faithful man. Well, things will take their course. I cannot rule them, I may as well supply the body's wants, since he has afforded me the means." As he was thinking, he drew his chair to the table, took some of the provisions which had been brought him, after which he again fell into a fit of thought, and then starting up, exclaimed aloud, "There is no use in calculating such circumstances as these. None can tell: the next minute will bring forth, and the plan is to be prepared to take advantage of whatever may happen, for circumstances must and indeed that will not permit a wise and well-witted man to abate their evil or to augment their good. So I will even go sleep as I can—but methinks the moon is rising," and, approaching the window, which was strongly barred, he looked out for a few minutes, as the orb of night rose red and large through the dull and heavy air of Hull. "Where is sweet Annie Walton now," he thought, "and whither is her dear bright mind journeying? Perhaps she is even now looking at the planet, and thinking of him who she believes far away. Yes, surely she will think of God's blessing on her sweet heart; and she soon know brighter days again, for they are sad ones. However, it is some consolation to know that she is unaware of this misfortune. Well, I will go and try to sleep." Then, after offering his prayers to God—he was not one to forget such homage—cast himself down upon the bed without taking off his clothes, and in a few minutes was sound asleep. During the two preceding days he had undergone much fatigue, and had not closed an

eye for eight-and-forty hours, so that at first his slumber was as profound as that of a peasant; but towards morning imagination reasserted her power, and took possession of his senses even in sleep.

He fancied that he was in Italy again, and that Charles Walton, looking as he had done in early youth, was walking beside him, along a terrace where cypresses and urns of sculptured stone flanked the broad gravel-walk which overhung a steep precipice. What possessed him he knew not, but it seemed as if some demon kept whispering in his ear to dare his loved companion to leap down; and though reluctant, he did so, knowing all the while that if his friend attempted it he would infallibly perish. "Charles," he said, in the wild perversity of the dreaming brain, "dare you stand with me on the top of that low wall, and jump down into the dell below?"

"Whatever you do, I will do, Francis," the young nobleman seemed to reply; and, without waiting for farther discussion, they both approached the edge, mounted the low wall, and then leaped off together. The earl's brain seemed to turn as he fell, and every thing receded before his dizzy sight, till at length he suddenly found himself upon his feet at the bottom unharmed, and, instead of his friend, Annie Walton standing beside him, in deep mourning, inquiring, "How could you be so rash, Francis?"

Before he could reply he woke, and, gazing wildly round him, saw the sunshine of the early morning streaming through the window, and cheering even the gloomy aspect of the prison.

"This is a strange dream," he thought, seating himself upon the edge of the bed, and leaning his head upon his hands; "a mighty strange dream, indeed! Have I really tempted Charles Walton to take such a dangerous leap, in persuading him to draw the sword for his king? No, no! He could not avoid it—he was already prepared; and, besides, the voice of duty spoke by my lips. Whatever be the result to him or to me, I cannot blame myself for doing that which was right. Weak men judge even their own actions by the results, when, in fact, they should forget all but the motives; and when satisfied that they are just and sufficient, should leave all the rest in the hands of God. I will think of this no more. It is but folly," and, rising, he advanced to the window, before which he heard the sound of people's voices speaking.

The surprise of Lord Beverley was not small at beholding straight before him the long person and never-to-be-mistaken nose of Captain Deciduous Barecolt, standing side by side with Sir John Hotham, governor of Hull, and apparently upon terms of gracious intimacy with that officer.

Barecolt was at that moment drawing, with the point of a cane upon the ground, a number of lines and angles, which seemed to the eyes of Lord Beverley very much like the plan of a fortification, while three stout soldiers, apparently in attendance upon the governor, stood at a little distance, and looked on in grave and respectful silence. Every now and then the worthy captain seized Sir John by the breast of his coat with all the exaggerated gesticulation of a Frenchman, pointed to the lines he had drawn, held out his stick towards other parts of Hull, shrugged, grinned, and chattered, and then drew

back to his demonstration again, with the utmost appearance of zeal and good-will.

"What, in the name of fortune, can the fellow be about?" murmured the earl. "He is surely not going to fortify Hull against the king! Well, I suppose, if he do, it will be easily taken. That is one comfort. But, on my word, he seems to have made great progress in Hotham's good graces. I trust it is not at my expense—no, no! He is not one of that sort of men. Folly and vice enough, but not dishonour. I have no small mind to try my eloquence on Hotham too," continued the earl; "I do not think he is so far committed with the Parliament as to be beyond recall to a sense of duty. He used to be a vain as well as an ambitious man; and, perhaps, if one could but hold out to his vanity and ambition the prospect of great honour and advancement as the reward for taking the first step towards healing the breaches in his country's peace, by making submission to the king, he might be gained. It is worth the trial, and if it cost me my head, it shall be made."

As he thus pondered, the governor and Captain Barecolt walked slowly on, followed by the three soldiers, and the sentinel before the door of the block-house recommenced his perambulations.

"Hollo! monsieur," cried Lord Beverley from the window; and, on the approach of the soldier, he explained to him, in a mixed jargon of French and English, that he much wished to have an interview with the governor, adding, that if it were granted, he might communicate something to Sir John Hotham which he would find of great importance.

"Why, there he stands," cried the soldier, "talking with the other Frenchman," and he pointed with his hand to a spot which the earl could not see, but where the governor had again paused to listen to Captain Barecolt's plans and devices.

"*Allez, allez!* tell him!" cried Lord Beverley; and the man immediately hastened to give the message.

In about three minutes he returned, saying, "He will send for you in an hour or two, monsieur; and, in the mean time, here comes your breakfast, piping hot."

CHAPTER XX.

MORE than an hour went by without Lord Beverley hearing any thing farther from the governor; and he was sitting at the table, meditating over his scheme, when his ear caught the sound of voices without.

"Ah, here comes the messenger," he thought, "to summon me to Hotham's presence;" but, the moment after, he distinguished the tones of his worthy companion Barecolt, who exclaimed, apparently addressing the sentinel, "But I must see de block-house, I tell you, sir; it be part of my duttee to see de block-house, and here be de wordy Capitaine Jenkin, one man of de big respectability, who tell you de same ting."

Captain Jenkins grumbled a word or two in confirmation of Barecolt's assertion; but the sentinel adhered steadfastly to his point, and said that the mounseer might do what he pleased with the outside of the place, but should not set his foot within the doors without a special order from the governor, under his own hand.

Of this permission, limited as it was, I hastened to take advantage; and having cautiously ascertained that his companion did not understand one word of the French language, he approached the window, at which he had caught sight of the face of Lord Beverley, and which was open, declaring that he had entered the inside, at all events.

The moment he was near, however, to the prisoner, rapidly, but in a low tone, can be done to get you out?"

He spoke in French, and the earl answered the same tongue, "Nothing that I know; ready to help me at a moment's notice. are you to be found?"

"At the Swan Inn," replied Barecolt. "I will be with you in the course of this day. I have a plan in my head," and, seeing Captain Jenkins, who had been speaking a few moments to the sentinel, was now approaching, walked on, and busied himself with examining the rest of the building.

Not long after he was gone, the earl was moved before the governor; and with one train-band on each side—for, at this time could boast of no other garrison—he was led to the block-house to Sir John Hotham's residence. After being conducted up a wide flight of stairs, he was shown into the same large room in the examination of Barecolt had taken. On the present occasion, however, to the earl, and somewhat to the dismay of the earl, he found the room half filled with people, many of whom he knew; and for an instant forgetting completely he was disguised, he thought that his scheme must now fall to the ground, and his immediate discovery take place.

The cold and strange looks, however, that turned upon him, both by Hotham himself and several of the officers, to whom the earl was personally known, soon restored his confidence, showing him that he was far better disguised than he had imagined. Never losing his presence of mind for a single instant, he advanced at once to Sir John Hotham, and made him a low bow, asking if he were the governor. The answer, of course, was in the affirmative, and he proceeded to question him in French, which he spoke with tolerable fluency. With perfect readiness, the earl answered all his questions, giving a most probable account of himself, stating that he had come over from France, recommended for the king, and that he expected every day at the French court that he would be obliged to have recourse to arms in his Parliament.

Several of the gentlemen present, who had then been really at the court of France, very readily, or pretended to have been so, stepped forward to ask a good number of questions of the earl, which were not very convenient for him to answer. He continued to parry them, however, with great dexterity for some time; but at last finding that this sort of cross-examination did not go on much longer without leading to detection, he turned suddenly to Sir John Hotham and asked him in a low voice if the gentleman given him the message which he had sent.

"Yes," replied the governor, "I received the message; what is it you have to communicate?"

"Something, sir, for your private ear," answered the earl, still speaking in French; "after which you will find of much importance which you will not regret to have known."

in only discover it to you if you grant me an interview with you alone."

"Faith, I must hear more about you, sir, before I can do that," replied Hotham. "Come ther with me, and I will speak to you for a moment in the window."

Thus saying, he led the way to the farther end of the room, where a deep bay-window looked out over the town. The distance from the rest of the company was considerable, and the angle the wall ensured that no distinct sound could reach the other part of the hall; but still Lord Beverley determined if possible, to obtain a great degree of privacy, for he knew not what might be the effect of the sudden disclosure he was about to make upon Sir John Hotham.

"Can I not speak with you in another room, sir?" he asked, still using the French tongue.

"That is quite impossible," answered Sir John Hotham; "you can say what you have to say here. Speak low, and no ears but mine will hear you."

The earl looked down, and then raising his eyes suddenly to the governor's face, he said in English,

"Do you know me, Sir John Hotham?"

The governor started, and looked at him attentively for a moment or two, but then replied in a decided tone,

"No, I do not."

"Well, then," replied the earl, "I will try whether I know Sir John Hotham, and whether he be the same man of honour I have always taken him to be. You see before you, sir, the Earl of Beverley, and you are well aware that the activity I have displayed in the service of the king, and the number of persons whom I have brought over to his interest, by showing them that whatever might be the case in times past, their duty to their king and their country is now the same—we are aware, I say, that these causes have rendered the Parliament my implacable enemies; and I do believe, that in confiding, as I do this day to you, instead of keeping up the disguise that I have maintained hitherto, I place myself in the hands of one who is too much a gentleman to give me up to the fury of my adversaries."

The astonishment which appeared on Sir John Hotham's face while the earl was making this communication, might have attracted the attention of his son and the rest of the company, had it not been fortunately turned towards them. He gazed earnestly on the earl's countenance, however, and at once recollecting his features, wondered that he had not discovered him at once. So transparent did the disguise seem to him as he had the secret, that he could scarcely persuade himself that the other gentlemen present would be long deceived, and he was only anxious to get the earl out of the room as soon as possible, as he was determined to justify the honourable character attributed to him.

"Say no more, say no more, sir," he replied, knocking down his countenance as best he might; "we cannot talk upon this subject now. I am satisfied, however, that you will not be sorry for the trust you have reposed in me, and will find me the same man as you supposed. I will see you again in private whenever I may meet with a convenient opportunity; but, in the mean time, I am afraid you must content yourself with the poor accommodation which you have, for I change in it would beget suspicion; and I have shrewd and evil eyes upon me here, so I must now send you away at once. Here, guard,"

he continued, "take the prisoner back. Let him be well used, and provided with all things necessary, but, at the same time, have a strict eye upon him, and suffer no one to communicate with him but myself."

Lord Beverley bowed and withdrew, and Hotham, with strong signs of agitation still in his countenance, returned to his companions, saying,

"That Frenchman is a shrewd fellow, and knows more of the queen's councils than I could have imagined: but I must go and write a despatch to the Parliament, for he has told me things that they will be glad to know, and I trust in a few days I shall learn more from him still."

Thus speaking, he retired from the hall, and one of the gentlemen present inquired of another who was standing near,

"Did you not think that what they were saying just now in the window sounded very like English?"

"Oh," replied Colonel Hotham, "my father's French has quite an English tone. He changes the words, it is true, but not the accent."

In the mean while the earl was carried back to the block-house, and towards evening he received a few words, written on a scrap of paper, telling him that the governor would be with him about ten o'clock that night.

This was a mark of favour and consideration which Lord Beverley scarcely expected, notwithstanding the difference of rank between himself and Sir John Hotham, and the promises of honourable dealing which the latter had made. There were also signs of a willingness to attend to his comfort, which were even more consolatory in the conclusions he drew from them than in the acts themselves. Poor Sinbad the sailor, when he fell into the hands of the cannibal blacks, looked upon all the good cheer that they placed before him as merely the means employed to fatten him previous to killing and eating him; but, as we have never had such anthropophagous habits in Great Britain, even during the great rebellion itself, when the earl saw sundry much more savoury dishes provided for his dinner than he had hitherto been favoured with, and a bottle of very good wine to wash them down withal, he received them as a mark of the governor's good intentions, and an indication that there was some probability of his imprisonment coming to an end by a more pleasant process than a walk to the scaffold.

He ate and drank, then, with renewed hope, and saw the sun go down with pleasure, totally forgetting Captain Barecolt's promise to see him at night, which, if he had remembered, it might have somewhat disturbed his serenity.

I know not whether the people of Hull are still a tribe early in their habits, but certainly such was the case in those days; and towards nine o'clock or a little after, the noises of a great town began to die away, and silence to resume her reign through the place. The watch, who had a Puritanical horror of every thing like merriment, as the reader may have in some degree perceived, took care to suffer neither shouting nor bawling in the streets of the good city after dark; and though from the windows of the room in which he was confined, the noble earl saw many a lantern pass along, it was still with a sober and steady pace; and with his usual imaginative activity of mind, he amused himself with fancying the character and occupation of the various personages who thus flitted before

his eyes, with many a comment and meditative reflection upon every thing in man's fate and nature. The lanterns, however, like the sounds, grew less and less frequent, and near a quarter of an hour had passed without his seeing one, when at length the clock of the neighbouring church slowly struck the hour of ten, pausing long upon every dull tone, which seemed like the voice of Time regretting the minutes that had flown.

In about ten minutes more, the sentry before the block-house challenged some one who approached rather nearer than he thought proper to his post. A signal word was given in reply, and the next moment the sounds of bolts being withdrawn, and keys turned in the lock were heard, announcing the approach of a visitor. The opening door, as the earl expected, showed the stout and somewhat heavy person of Sir John Hotham, who entered with a sort of furtive look behind him, as if he were afraid of being watched.

"Keep at some distance in front," he said, turning to the guard, "and do not let any one, coming from the side of my house, approach within a hundred yards." Thus saying, he shut the door of the room, locked it, and put the key in his pocket; then turning to the prisoner, he observed, "It is a terrible thing, my lord, to have nothing but spies about one, and yet such is my case. I do not know what I have done to deserve this."

"It is the most natural thing in the world, Sir John," said the earl, shaking him warmly by the hand; "when perverse, rash, and rebellious men know that they have to deal with a gentleman of honour, who, however much he may be attached to liberty, is well disposed towards his sovereign, they naturally suspect, and spy upon him."

"You judge me rightly, my lord—you judge me rightly," replied Sir John Hotham; "I have always been a friend equally to my country and my king, and deeply do I lament the discord which has arisen between his majesty and the Parliament. But I see you understand my conduct well, my lord, and need not be told that I entertain very different principles from the men who have driven things into this strait. I vow to God I have always entertained the highest affection and sense of duty towards his majesty, and lament deeply to think that my refusing to open the gates of Hull, when the king demanded entrance, will always be considered as the beginning, and perhaps the cause of this civil war, whereas I did it in my own defence."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the earl. "The king is not aware that such is the case; for, when many people assured his majesty that there must have been some error in the business, he has replied often, 'God grant it be so; for I always held Sir John Hotham to be a man of singular uprightness, and well affected towards myself, until he ventured to shut his gates in his king's face.'"

"Ay, sir," exclaimed the governor, "both the king and I have been greatly deceived; and I will now tell you what I never told to any one, which I will beseech you, when we find means to set you free, to report to his majesty, that he may judge favourably of me. There were certain men, whom I have since discovered to be arrant knaves, and employed by the more furious persons of the Parliament to deceive me, who assured me, with every protestation of concern for my safety, that it was the king's intention, as soon as he got into Hull, to hang me without form of trial, farther than a mere summary court-

"It was false, sir; it was raised altogether, I assure you," replied the earl. "Nothing was ever farther from the king's intention."

"I know it—I know it now," answered Sir John Hotham; "but I believed it at the time. However, to speak of what more nearly concerns you, my lord, I came hither to tell you, that, as you have so frankly put yourself in my hands, I will in no degree betray your trust; and I must wish you to consider in what way, and upon what pretext I can set you at liberty, so that you may safely go whithersoever you will. But there is one thing you must remember, that the secret of who and what you are, and of my wish to treat you kindly, must be kept inviolably between you and me, for there is not a man here whom I can trust; and especially not my own son, who is one of the worst and most evil-intentioned men towards the king and his own father in all the realm."

"The only way that I can see," replied the earl, "will be for me to pass for a Frenchman still, and for you to make it appear that I am willing to purchase my liberty by giving you, at once, some information regarding his majesty's designs, and obtaining more for you hereafter. But so sure am I of your good intentions towards me, that I fear not to remain here several days, if I may but hope that through my post-mediation you and the king may be reconciled to each other. It is, indeed, a sad and terrible thing, that a handful of ill-disposed men, such as those who now rule in the Parliament, should be able to overwhelm this country with bloodshed and devastation, when the king himself is willing to grant his people every thing that they can rightly and justly demand; and, moreover, that they should have the power, when their intention is clearly not alone to overthrow this or that monarch, but to destroy and abolish monarchy itself, to involve gentlemen of high esteem, such as yourself, in acts which they abhor, and which must first prove disastrous to the country, and ultimately destructive to themselves. Do not let them deceive you, Sir John," he continued; "this struggle can have but one termination, as you will plainly see if you consider a few points. You cannot for a moment doubt that the turbulence and exactions of these men have already alienated from them the affections of the great body of the people. The king is now at the head of a powerful force, which is daily increasing. A great supply of ammunition and arms has just been received. The fleet is entirely at his disposal, and ready to appear before any place against which he may direct it; and, although he is unwilling to employ foreign troops against his rebellious subjects till the last extremity, yet you must evidently perceive that every prince in Christendom is personally interested in supporting his majesty, and will do it as soon as asked. Nay, more: I will tell you what is not generally known, that the Prince of Orange is now preparing to come over at the head of his army, and you may well suppose that his first stroke will be at Hull, which cannot resist him three days."

Sir John Hotham looked somewhat bewildered and confounded by all these arguments, and exclaimed, in a musing tone, "How is it to be done? that is the only question, How is it to be done?"

"If you mean, Sir John," continued Lord Beverley, "how is peace to be restored to the country, methinks it may be easily done; be-

"first I would have you consider what glory and renown would accrue to that man who should ward off all these terrible events; who, by his sole power and authority, and by setting a noble example to his countrymen, should pave the way to a reconciliation between King Charles and his Parliament, and, at the same time, secure the rights and liberties of the people and the stability of the throne. I will ask you if you are not sure that both monarch and people, seeing themselves delivered from the horrors of a civil war, would not join in overwhelming him with honours and rewards of all kinds, and whether his name would not descend to posterity as the preserver of his country. You are the man, Sir John Hotham, who can do all this. You are the man who can obtain this glorious name. The surrender of Hull to the king would at once remedy the mistake committed on both parts, would crush the civil war in the egg, would strengthen the good intentions of all the wise and better men in the Parliament, would make the whole country rise as one man to cast off the treason in which it has unwillingly taken part; and for my own self I can only say, that men attribute to me some influence both with the king and queen, and that all which I do possess should be employed to obtain for you due recompense for the services you have rendered your country."

Hotham was evidently touched and moved; for so skillfully had the earl introduced every subject that could affect the various passions of which he was susceptible, that at every word some new pleader had risen up in the bosom of the governor, to advocate the same course that Lord Beverley was urging. Now it was fear that spoke; now hope; now anger at the suspicions entertained by the Parliament; now expectations from the king. Pride, vanity, ambition, all had their word; and good Sir John's face betrayed the agitation and wavering of his mind, so that the earl was in no slight hope of speedily gaining one of the most important converts that could be made to the royal cause, when, to the surprise of both, the door of the chamber in which they were was violently shaken from without, and a voice was heard muttering, with a tremendous oath,

"They have taken the key out: curse me if I don't force the lock off with my dagger."

Sir John Hotham started and looked towards the door with fear and trepidation, for he expected nothing less than to see the face of his son, or some other of the violent men who had been sent down by the Parliament; and, to say truth, not the countenance of a personage, whose appearance in his own proper person is generally deprecated by even those who have the closest connexion with him "sub rosa," could have been more unpleasant to the Governor of Hull. The Earl of Beverley started too, with no very comfortable feelings; for not only was he unwilling to have his conversation at that moment interrupted, but moreover, dear reader, he recognised at once the tones of the magnanimous Captain Barecolt.

"It is my son, on my life!" cried Hotham, in a low tone. "What, in the fiend's name, is to be done? This insolence is insufferable; and yet I would give my right hand not to be found here! Hark! on my life, he is forcing the lock!"

"Stay, stay!" whispered the earl. "Get behind the bed; but first give me the key. I

pledge you my word, Sir John, not even to attempt an escape; and, moreover, to send this person away without discovering you. Leave him to me, leave him to me. You may trust me!"

"Oh, willingly, willingly," cried Sir John, giving him the key, and drawing back behind the bed. "For Heaven's sake, do not let him find me!"

The earl took the key and approached the door; but, before we relate what followed, we must turn for a moment to explain the sudden appearance of Captain Barecolt.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN BARECOLT was not, according to the old proverb, like a garden full of weeds; for, although he was undoubtedly a man of words, he was also a man of deeds, as the reader may have already remarked, and the deeds which he had performed since we last left him sitting in the parlour of Mrs. White were manifold and various. His first expedition was to the chamber of Arrah Neil, where the worthy landlady's sense of decorum, as well as her privilege of curiosity, kept her present during the conference.

Poor Arrah, although at one time she certainly had not been impressed with the deepest sense of the personal merits of Captain Deciduous Barecolt, had seen enough of his conduct in the skirmish which took place at the bridge to entertain a much higher respect for him than before, and, even had not such been the case, there is something in the very sight of persons whom we have beheld in companionship with those we love, which, by awakening sweet associations—those pleasant door-keepers of the heart—renders their presence cheering to us in the hour of misfortune and distress. Mrs. White, too, upon Captain Barecolt's own statement, had assured Arrah that he came expressly to deliver her; and she looked upon her escape from the clutches of Mr. Dry as now quite certain, with the aid of the good landlady, and the more vigorous assistance of Barecolt's long arm and long sword. She greeted him gladly, then, and with a bright smile; but Barecolt, when he now saw her, could scarcely believe that she was the same person with whom he had marched two days during the advance from Bishop's Merton, not alone from the change of her dress, though that, of course, made a very great difference, but from the look of intelligence and mind which her whole countenance displayed, and from the total absence of that lost and bewildered expression which had been before so frequently present on her face. Her great beauty, which had then been often clouded by that strange shadow that we have so frequently mentioned, was now lighted up like a fair landscape, first seen in the dim twilight of the morning, when the sun rises upon it in all the majesty of light.

"Do not be the least afraid, my dear young lady," said Captain Barecolt, after the first congratulations of their meeting were over, and he had quieted down his surprise and admiration. "Do not be at all afraid. I will deliver you, if the gates should be guarded by fiery dragons. Not only have I a thousand times accomplished enterprises to which this of circumventing the dull bourgeois of Hull is no more than eating

the mites of a cheese off the point of a knife, but here we have to assist us good Mrs. White, one of the most excellent women that ever lived upon the face of this earth. It is true, I have but had the pleasure and honour of her acquaintance for the space of one hour and three quarters; but when you come to consider that I have been called upon to converse, and deal with, and investigate, and examine, in the most perilous circumstances, and in the most awful situations, many millions of my fellow-creatures, of every different shade, variety, and complexion of mind, you will easily understand that it needs but a glance for me to estimate and appreciate the excellence of a person so well disposed as Mrs. White."

"Oh, yes!" cried Arrah, interrupting him, "I know that she is kind and good, and will do every thing on earth to help and deliver me. She was kind to me long ago, and one can never forget kindness. But when shall we go, Captain Barecolt? Cannot we go to-night?"

"That is impossible, my dear young lady," replied Barecolt, "for there are many things to be done in the first instance. These papers which Mrs. White talks of, they must be obtained, if possible. Has this man got them about him, do you think?"

"I cannot tell," replied Arrah; "I do not even know that he has got them at all. I only know that the cottage was stripped when I came back, and that they, with every thing else, were gone."

"Oh, he has got them! he has got them, my dear child!" cried Mrs. White; "for, depend upon it, that if he did not know you were a very different person from Sargeant Neil's granddaughter just as well as I do, he would never be so anxious about marrying you—a wizened old red-herring. I dare say he has got them safe in his trunk mail."

"I will go," said Barecolt, "and cut them out of his heart;" and at the same moment he rose, laid his hand upon his dagger, and strode towards the door.

"Don't do him any mischief—don't do him any mischief in my house," cried Mrs. White, laying her hand upon the captain's arm. "Pray remember, captain, there will be inquiry made, as sure as you are alive. You had better not take them till you are quite ready to go."

"Thou art a wise woman, Mrs. White," replied Captain Barecolt; "thou art a wise woman, and I will forbear. I will but ascertain whether he have these papers, while he yet lies in the mud of drunkenness, and leave the appropriation of them till an after period."

Thus saying, he quitted the room; and having marked, with all his shrewd perception, the door which had opened and shut when the reverend and respectable Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was carried tipsy to his bed, he walked straight into his room with a candle in his hand, and, approaching the drunken man, gazed on his face, to see that he was still in that state of insensibility to what was passing round him which was necessary to his present purposes. Mr. Dry was happily snoring unconsciously, almost in a state of apoplexy; and, approaching a large pair of saddle-bags, Barecolt took them up, laid them on a chair, and opened them without either ceremony or scruple. The wardrobe of Mr. Dry was soon exposed to view: a short cloak, a black coat, a clean stiff band, well starched and ironed in case he should be called upon to hold forth; a pair of brown breeches and gray stockings;

three shirts of delicately fine linen, and sundry other articles, were soon cast upon the ground, and the arm of the valorous captain plunged up to the elbow in the heart of the bags, searching about for any thing having the feel of paper. For some minutes his perquisition was vain; but at length, in drawing out his hand suddenly, the knuckles struck against the lining of the bag at a spot where something like a button made itself apparent, and, feeling more closely, the worthy captain discovered an inside pocket.

Into that his fingers were soon dipped, and with an air of triumph he drew forth some three sheets of written paper, and carrying them to the candle, examined them minutely. What was his disappointment, however, when the first words that struck his eyes were, "Habakkuk, ii. 5; Chronicles, ii. vii. 9; Micah, 6; Lamentations, iii. 7; Amos, ii. 4—For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

"The hypocritical old swine," cried Barecolt; "what have we got next?" and, turning over the paper, he looked at the paper which was enclosed in the other, which he found to be something a little more important, namely, a letter from the Parliamentary Colonel Thistleton to Mr. Dry, informing him that he would be at Bishop's Merton on the day after the date thereof, and begging him to keep a watchful eye upon the malignant lord, that no changes might take place till he arrived, thus establishing, beyond all manner of doubt, worthy Mr. Dry's accessoryship in the visit of the Parliamentary commissioners to the house of Lord Walton.

The next paper, which was the only one now remaining, seemed to puzzle Captain Barecolt more than even Mr. Dry's list of texts. It was evidently a paper of memoranda, in his own hand-writing, but so brief that, without some clew, little could be made of it. At the top stood the name of Hugh O'Donnell; then came the words, "Whose daughter was her mother?" Below that was written, "Are there any of them living? What's the county? Ulster, it would seem. Sequestered? or attained? Where did the money come from? How much a year? What will he take?"

Bearing this away, after having made another search in the bag, and thrown it down upon the scattered articles of clothing, which remained upon the floor, worthy Captain Barecolt retraced his steps to the room of Arrah Neil, and there, with the fair girl herself and the worthy landlady, he pored over the paper, and endeavoured to gain some farther insight into its meaning.

Conjectures enough were formed—but with them we will not trouble the reader; suffice it that Captain Barecolt determined to copy the paper, which being done, he replaced it, with Mr. Dry's apparel, in that worthy gentleman's bags, and then left him to sleep off his drunkenness, wishing him heartily that sort of sickening headache which is the usual consequence of such intemperance as he had indulged in that night.

To Arrah Neil he subsequently explained that his various avocations in the town of Hull would give him enough to do during the following day, but that he did hope and trust, about midnight, or very early the next morning, to be able to guide her safely forth from the gales of Hull, together with a friend of his, who, he explained to her, was still a captive in the hands of the governor.

After bidding her adieu, he descended once more to the little parlour of Mrs. White, and there held a long and confidential conference with her regarding his proceedings on the following day. He found the good lady all that he could have desired, a staunch Royalist at heart, and thoroughly acquainted with the character, views, and principles of a multitude of the officers and soldiers of the train-bands. She told him whom he could depend upon and whom he could not; where, when, and how they were to be found, and what were the best means of rendering them accessible to his solicitations. She also furnished him with the address of Mr. Hugh O'Donnell; and, having gained all his information, the worthy captain retired to bed, to rise prepared for action on the following day.

Profound were his slumbers. No dream shook the long and cumbrous body that lay there like some colossal column fallen on the sands of the desert, and he scarcely moved or stirred a finger till the morning light peeped with her gray eyes in at the window, when up he started, rubbing his head, and exclaiming, "There's the trumpet, by —."

It was the first vision he had had, but in a moment or two he was wide awake again, and remembering his appointment with the governor of Hull, he plunged his head into cold water, wiped it with the towels provided, drew his beard into a neat point, and putting on his clothes, again descended to seek for some breakfast before he set out.

He had not got through half the flagon of beer, however, nor demolished above a pound of beef, when Captain Jenkins arrived, and found him speaking execrable English to Nancy, in order to hurry her with some fried eggs, which she was preparing as an addition to the meal.

"Begar, I never was see such woman as de English cooks. Dem can no make de omelet dan dey can fly. Vait but von leetle meenute, my dear Captain Jenkin, and I go wid you."

"I can't wait," said Captain Jenkins, in a rough tone; "it's time to be there now. If you had lodged at the Rose, we should not have had half so far to go."

"Ah, dat is very true, dat is very true," cried Barcolt; "I lodge there anoder time; but if we must go, why den, here goes;" and, putting the tankard to his mouth, with one long and prodigious draught he brought the liquor within to the bottom. Being, then, once more conducted to the presence of the governor, he was detained some little time while Sir John gave various orders and directions, and then set out with him upon a tour of the fortifications, followed, as we have represented the party, by three stout soldiers, Captain Jenkins having been dismissed for the time. If Barcolt, however, had won upon the governor during their first interview, on this second occasion he ingratulated himself still farther with the worthy officer: nor, indeed, was it without cause that Barcolt rose high in the opinion of Sir John; for he had his own sense of what was honest and right, though it was a somewhat twisted and perverted one, and he would not, on any account, so long as his advice was asked, and likely to be taken, have given wrong and dangerous counsel upon the pretence of friendship and service.

He pointed out, then, to the governor, with great shrewdness and discrimination, numerous weak points in the defences, gave him various hints for strengthening them without the loss of

much time, and while pausing before the block-house, in which he knew Lord Beverley was confined, he drew upon the ground the plan of a small fort, which he showed the governor might be very serviceable in the defence of the town upon the river side.

Having now gone nearly half round the walls, and being pressed by hunger as much as business, Sir John returned to break his fast, and once more placed Captain Barcolt under the guidance of Jenkins, adding a hint, however, to the latter, that his suspicions of the Frenchman were removed, and that every assistance was to be given him in carrying into execution the suggestions he had made.

Barcolt's difficulty now was, how to get rid of his companion; but as the citizen-soldier was somewhat puffy and heavy in his temperament, our worthy friend contrived, in the space of a few hours, to cast him in such a state of perspiration and fatigue by rapid motion from one part of the town to the other, that he was ready to drop. In the course of these perambulations, he led him, as we have seen, once more past the block-house, in order to confer for a moment with Lord Beverley, after which he brought him dexterously into the neighbourhood of his own dwelling, and then telling him if he would go and get his dinner, while he did the same, they would meet again in two hours at a spot which he named.

The proposal was a blessed relief to the captain of the train-bands, who internally promised himself to take very good care to give the long-legged Frenchman as little of his company as possible.

Barcolt, however, though his appetite, as the reader knows, was of a capacious and ever-ready kind, sacrificed inclination to what he considered duty, and hastened, without breaking bread, to seek two of those persons whom Mrs. White had pointed out to him as worthy of all confidence, and likely to engage in the adventure which he had in hand.

He had some difficulty, however, in making the first of these, who was an ancient of the train-bands, and well affected to the king, repose any trust in him; for the man was prudent and somewhat suspicious by nature, and he entertained shrewd doubts as to the honesty of Captain Barcolt's purpose towards him. He shook his head, assumed a blank and somewhat unmeaning countenance, vowed he did not understand, and when the worthy captain spoke more plainly, told him that he had better take care how he talked such stuff in Hull.

On this hint Barcolt withdrew, suspecting that the information he had received from his landlady was not the most accurate in the world. He resolved, however, to make another effort, and try to gain assistance from the second person she had mentioned, though he, having displayed his loyalty somewhat too openly, was not one to be placed in a situation of confidence by the officers of the Parliament.

This man, who was a sign painter by trade, named Falgate, was found, with much difficulty, living up two pairs of stairs in a back street; but when Captain Barcolt had climbed to his high abode, he found a personage of a frank and joyful countenance hewing away at the remains of a leg of mutton, in the midst of a large wooden trencher, and washing his food down with copious draughts of what seemed very good beer. His propensity towards these creature-comforts

was a favourable omen in the eyes of our worthy captain; but he was joyfully surprised when good Diggory Falgate started up, with his mouth all shining with mutton fat, and embraced him heartily, exclaiming, "Welcome, my noble captain. I have been expecting you this last hour."

He proceeded, however, speedily to explain that he had looked in at the Swan a short time before, to take his morning draught, and that the good landlady had given him information of Captain Barecolt's character and objects.

With him all arrangements were very easy. Diggory Falgate was ready for any enterprise that might present itself, and with the gay and dashing spirit which reigned among Cavaliers of high and low degree, he was just as willing to walk up to a cannon's mouth in the service of the king, as to a tankard of strong waters on his own behalf; to cut down a Roundhead, to make love to a pretty maiden, to spend his money, or to sing his song.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he exclaimed, as Barecolt intimated to him the rebuff that he met with from the ancient of the train-bands; "Billy Hazard is a cunning rogue. I'll bet you a pint of sack that he thought you some Roundhead come to take him in. Stay here, stay here, and finish my tankard for me. I'll run and fetch him, and you will soon see a difference."

Barecolt willingly agreed to play the part he proposed, and before he had made free more than twice with the large black jug which graced his new friend's table, Falgate had himself returned, followed by his more sedate and cautious acquaintance.

"Here he is, here he is, as wise as a whipping-post," exclaimed the sign-painter, "which receives all the lashes and never says a word. There sits Captain Barecolt, Ancient Hazard; so to him, and tell him what you will do to serve the king."

"A great deal," replied Hazard. "I beg your pardon, sir, for giving you such a rough answer just now, but I did not know you."

"Always be cautious, always be cautious, mine ancient," replied Barecolt; "so will you be a general in time, and a good one; but now let us to business as fast as possible. You must know that there's a prisoner—"

"Ay, I know, in the black-house," cried Diggory Falgate, "and he is to be taken out to-night. Isn't it so, noble captain? Now I'll bet you three radishes to a dozen of crowns that this is some man of great consequence."

Barecolt nodded his head.

"Is it the king?" asked Falgate, in a whisper.

"Pooh! nonsense," cried Barecolt. "The king's at the head of his army, and, before ten days are over, will march into Hull with drum and colours, will hang the governor, disband the garrison, and overthrow the walls. Why, the place can no more hold out against the power that the king has, than a fresh egg can resist the side of a frying-pan. No, this gentleman is a man of the greatest consequence, in whom the king places the greatest reliance, and he must be got out at all risks. If you can but get rid of that cursed guard, if it be but for ten minutes, I will do all the rest."

"That will be no difficult matter," replied Hazard, after thinking for a moment. "Here, Diggory and I will manage all that; but how will you get him out of the town when you've done?"

"That's all arranged already," replied Bare-

colt; "I have a pass for visiting the walls and gates at any hour between sunrise and sunset, to inspect and repair the fortifications, forsooth. I will manage the whole of that matter; but how will you contrive to get away the guard?"

Diggory and his companion consulted for a moment together, and at length the former clapped his hands, exclaiming, "That will do! that will do! Hark ye, Captain Barecolt, we are not particularly strict soldiers here, and I will get the fellow away to drink with me."

"He won't do it," exclaimed Barecolt. "It's death by the law."

"Then I'll quarrel with him," replied Diggory; "and, in either case, up comes mine ancient here, rates him soundly, and relieves him of his guard, sends him back to the guard-house, and bids him send down the next upon the roll. In the mean while, you get your man out, and away with him, locking the door behind you, and no one knows any thing of the matter."

"It will do, it will do," cried Barecolt; and, after some farther conversation, in which all the particulars of their plan were arranged, Barecolt took his leave, appointing them to meet him at the Swan that night towards ten o'clock, and proceeded on his way to seek out the house of Mr. Hugh O'Donnell.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE was a long row of sheds at the far end of the town of Hull, open towards the Humber, and enclosed on three sides towards the town. A little patch of green lay on one side the city wall; on the other, between the sheds and the river, ran a small footpath, and behind rose a good-looking dwelling of two stories high. With a quick but quiet step—unusually quiet, indeed; for he generally displayed his high opinion of himself in the elasticity of his toes—Captain Barecolt pursued the little path till he came in front of the sheds, and then paused to reconnoitre the ground. He first looked into the open side of the buildings, but nothing did he see but sundry stockfish hanging up in rows by the tail, together with a heap of coals in one corner, and two large bales or packages covered with coarse canvass in another. He then looked over the Humber, where the sun was struggling with some misty clouds, gilding the sky, and glittering on the calm, unruffled waters. There was nothing of great importance to be discovered on that side either, and the only object that seemed to attract the attention of the worthy captain was the top of a boat's mast, which rose over the bank between him and the river. As soon as he perceived it, however, he turned an ear in that direction, and thought he heard people speaking; upon which he advanced quietly to the top of the bank and looked down. There was a man in the boat, apparently about to push off, and another standing on the shore, giving him some directions; and the first sight of the latter showed our friend that he had not mistaken his way, for there he beheld the stout, tall, good-looking, elderly man whom he had seen with Mrs. White on the preceding evening.

His back was turned to Captain Barecolt, and as the latter stood waiting till the boat had pushed off, he heard him say, "Well! don't make a noise about it. Do every thing softly and quietly."

The man in the boat, however, at once caught a sight of the intruder upon their conversation, and pointed towards him with his hand, upon which Mr. Hugh O'Donnell turned quickly round, with an inquiring and somewhat stern expression; and then advanced straight up to Captain Barecolt, while the boat rowed away.

"Pray, sir, are you wanting me?" demanded Mr. O'Donnell, with a strong touch of that peculiar percussion of the breath, which has acquired—why or wherefore, who can tell?—the name of brogue, and regarding the captain with not the most amicable glance in the world.

"Yes! Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt, in good plain English, "I am wanting you; and, by your leave, we must have a little conversation together."

Hugh O'Donnell gazed at him with some surprise, for he recollected him well as the French officer who had visited the sign of the Swan on the preceding evening; but he was a cautious man, notwithstanding his Milesian blood, long accustomed to deal with somewhat dangerous affairs, and well aware that the most indiscreet of all passions is surprise; and therefore, without appearing to recognise his visitor, he said, "If our conversation is to be at all long, sir, it had better be within doors than without."

"It may be long," replied Barecolt, dryly, "and yet it cannot be very long, for I have not too much time to spare; but, whether long or short, it had better be where we can have no eaves-droppers, Mr. O'Donnell."

"Always better, sir," replied O'Donnell, "and so we will walk in."

Barecolt followed him to the house, where a clean and respectable old woman servant was seen sanding the floor of a parlour, the boards of which were scrubbed to a marvellous whiteness; though the walls, to say the truth, were somewhat dingy, and a strong flavour of tobacco smoke rather detracted from the purity of the air. That odour, however, was no objection to the nose of Captain Barecolt, who cast himself into a chair, while the master of the mansion sent away the servant, and closed the door. As soon as this process was complete, the worthy captain fixed his eyes upon Mr. O'Donnell, and demanded, "You recollect me, of course, sir?"

"I think I have seen your face somewhere," replied the Irishman; "but, Lord love you, I never recollect any thing after it is over. It's better not, sir. I make life a ready-money business, and keep neither receipts nor bills."

"Quite right, Mr. O'Donnell," replied Captain Barecolt; "but yet, I think I must get you to draw a draught upon the past. That word or two from Mrs. White will tell you what it is about;" and he handed his companion across the little round oaken table a small bit of paper.

O'Donnell took it, read the contents, and then mused for a minute or two, tapping the table with his fingers.

"Well! sir," he said at length, "what is it you want to know?"

"All that you can tell me about the young lady whom they call Arrah Neil!"

"Oh, sir, I will tell you all I know about her in a minute," replied the other; "she is now at the Swan, Mrs. White's own house, under the care, or, if you like it better, in the hands of a very reverend gentleman, called Master Dry, of Longsoken."

"That won't do, Mr. O'Donnell, that won't do," exclaimed Barecolt. "What I want to

know is about the past—not the present, of which I know more than you do, Mr. O'Donnell."

"I never seek to know any thing of other people's business," replied O'Donnell, dryly. "I have enough to do to attend to my own."

"Which is the supplying Roman Catholic gentry with salt fish for fast days, together with beads, missals, crucifixes, and other little triquetras for private use," answered Barecolt, who had been using his eyes, and forming his own conclusions from numerous indications, apparently trifling.

O'Donnell, without any change of expression, gazed at him gravely, and the captain continued, "But that is nothing to the purpose, my good friend. I see you are a prudent man, and, I dare say, you have cause to be so. However, I will tell you why I inquire; and then we will see whether you will not be kind enough to a poor young lady, to give her some information concerning her own affairs, of which, from the death of poor old Sergeant Neil, and his papers having been carried off by this old puritanical hunk, Dry, she has been kept in ignorance. You must know that this young lady has found great and powerful friends in the Lord Walton and his sister."

"Then why did they suffer her to fall into this man's hands?" demanded O'Donnell.

"Because they could not prevent it," replied Barecolt; and he went on to give a full account of the march from Bishop's Merton, and the skirmish which had taken place upon the road, with all of which we need not trouble the reader, whose imagination can supply or not, as it pleases, Captain Barecolt's account of his own deeds of arms. From those deeds, after due commemoration, he went on to speak of Lord Walton's anxiety for poor Arrah Neil's safety; and though we cannot presume to say that his tale was plain, or unvarnished either, yet there was enough of truth about it to make some change in Mr. O'Donnell's views.

"Where is Lord Walton to be found?" demanded the latter.

"He is with the king at Nottingham," answered Barecolt.

"Well, then, he shall hear from me before long," replied O'Donnell.

"You had better let me bear him your message, my good sir," said the captain: "You may judge, from my being intrusted here with such important business, that I am one in whom you may place the most unlimited confidence."

"Perhaps so, sir," answered O'Donnell; "but if I were such a fool, or such a scoundrel, to betray other people's secrets, how should I expect that you would keep them?"

"That is very true," rejoined Barecolt; "but if you do not tell them to me, and help me too to get the young lady out of this town of Hull, you will be compelled to tell them to her enemies, and may make her situation a great deal worse than it is now."

"They can't compel me! I defy them!" cried O'Donnell, sharply; "and help you to get her out of Hull, I will with all my heart; but how is that to be done?" and the next moment he asked, in a meditative tone, "What makes you think they will ask me any questions?"

"I not only think they will ask you questions, Mr. O'Donnell, but I will tell you what those questions will be," replied the captain; and, taking a paper from his pocket, he went on.

"Before many hours are over, you will have Mr. Dry himself here, and perhaps the justices, if not the governor, and you will be asked whose daughter was her mother? are any of her family living? in what county? in Ulster? whether the estates were sequestered, or the blood attainted? where the money came from you used to send to poor Neil, and how much it was a year?"

"Oh, by —, they must have got hold of a good clew!" exclaimed O'Donnell, with more agitation than he had hitherto displayed.

"That they have, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt; "but if Dry comes alone, as he will most likely do at first, he will ask you one other question before he tries to force you, and that is, how much you will take to tell him the whole story, that he may possess himself of the property, and force the poor child into marrying him."

"Ay, he's a reasonable man, I dare say, Master Dry," replied the Irishman, with a sarcastic smile; "but he will find himself mistaken; and as to forcing me, they can't. Moreover, for your own questions, good sir, all I shall say is this, that you may tell Lord Walton that he must take care of this poor young lady."

"That he is willing enough to do, without my telling," rejoined Barecolt.

"Ay, but he must take care of her like the apple of his eye," replied O'Donnell; "for if any harm happen to her, he will never forgive himself. He is a kind, good man, is he not?"

"As gallant a Cavalier as ever lived," said Barecolt.

"And young?" demanded O'Donnell.

"Some seven or eight-and-twenty, I should guess," was the answer.

The master of the house mused.

"That may be fortunate or unfortunate, as it happens," he said, at length; "at all events, he ought to have intimation of what he is doing. Tell him that he shall hear more from me very shortly—as soon as possible—as soon as I can get leave; and now to speak of how to get her out of Hull."

"But will you not let me tell Lord Walton who she is?" demanded Barecolt.

"If Sergeant Neil has told him any thing already, well," replied O'Donnell; "if not, he shall hear more soon; but, at all events, tell him to cherish and protect her as he would one of his own kindred; for if he do not, and have any more heart than a stone, he will repent it bitterly. No more on that head, master! now for your plans."

"Why, Master O'Donnell," replied Captain Barecolt, "my plans, like your secrets, are my own; and I do not tell them easily, especially when I get nothing in return."

"But you said you wished me to help to get the young lady out of Hull. How am I to do so without knowing what you intend to do?"

"I will show you in a minute, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt. "What I need is horse-flesh, and, as far as I can see, very little of it is to be found in Hull. The governor walks afoot, the officers of the garrison, such as it is, trudge upon their own legs; and I have seen nothing with four feet but sundry cats, half a dozen dogs, and every now and then a fat horse in a coal cart. I want beasts to carry us, Master O'Donnell; that is my need, and if you can find means to furnish us with them, I will contrive to get the young lady out."

"Oh, there are plenty of horses in Hull,"

answered O'Donnell; "but how did you come hither?"

"By sea," replied his companion; "but these matters not. If you can bring or send three good horses, one with a woman's saddle, to the first village on the road to York—I forget the name of the place—you will do me a service, aid poor Arrah Neil, and be well paid for your pains."

"To Newlands you mean," said O'Donnell; "but Newlands is a long way for you to go on foot. 'Tis more than two miles, and if you are caught you are lost. Stay! there is a little low ale-house by the green side, just a mile from the town gates. The horses shall be there—but at what time?"

"Some time before daybreak to-morrow," replied Barecolt; "for, as soon as I see the first ray of the sun, I am off with my companions."

"Have you more than one?" demanded the Irishman.

"The lady, and a gentleman, a friend of mine," answered the worthy captain; "otherwise I should not have wanted three horses."

"But how will you pass the gates?" inquired the other; "they are very strict at that side, for they fear enterprises from York."

"There's my key," replied Barecolt, producing the governor's pass; "but, for fear it should not fit the lock, Master O'Donnell, I shall try it five or six times before nightfall. What I mean is, that I will go out and in several times, that the people may know my face."

His companion gazed at the pass, and then at Captain Barecolt for several moments, wondering not a little what might be the real character of his visitor, and what the means by which he had contrived to obtain the document which he spread before him. There it was, however, not to be doubted—a genuine order under Sir John Hotham's own hand, for the sentries, guards, warders, and officers of all kinds of the town of Hull, to give free passage, at any hour between daybreak and nightfall, to Captain François Jersval, and the workmen employed by him to inspect and repair the fortifications of the city, and to offer him no let or hindrance, but rather afford him every assistance.

"And now, Master O'Donnell," continued Barecolt, observing, with a certain degree of pride, that he had succeeded in puzzling his companion, "let us speak about the price of these horses."

"That I cannot tell till I buy them," replied O'Donnell; "but I shall see you to-night up at the Swan, and we can settle that matter then."

"Perhaps I may be out," answered Barecolt, recollecting his engagement with Hazard and Falgate.

"Well, then, I will wait till you return," replied O'Donnell; "but, in the mean time, I must get the horses out before the gates close to-night. To what price would you like to go for the two?"

"I said three, Master O'Donnell," exclaimed Barecolt; "pray do not be short of the number."

"No, no," replied the other; "they shall be three, but I will pay for the young lady's horse. I have money in hand that should have gone to poor old Neil, but when I wrote about it he did not answer."

"Dead men seldom do," replied Barecolt; "but as to the price, there is no use of buying any thing very beautiful for me. My own char-

gers are of the finest breed in Europe, between a Turkish courser and a powerful Norman mare; but as I don't want these horses for battle, all that is needful will be to see that they be good strong beasts, willing to work for a day or two. But one thing that is to be remembered, Mr. O'Donnell, is, that if you do come up to the Swan seeking me, you are only to know me as 'de Capitaine Jersval, one French officer who be come to help de governor to put de fortification in de repair.'"

"And pray, sir, what is your real name?" asked O'Donnell, with an air of simplicity.

"What is Arrah Neil's?" rejoined Barecolt; and, both laughing, they separated for the time, without affording each other any farther information.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Poor Arrah Neil had passed an anxious and uneasy day; for, though the knowledge that she had a friend so near, ready to aid in her escape, had proved no slight consolation; and though hope, of course, magnified Captain Barecolt's powers, and elevated his qualities far beyond their real extent, yet suspense is always full of terrors, and fear usually treads close upon the steps of hope. Ezekiel Dry also had suffered all those blessed results which intemperance is sure to entail; and having lain in his bed for several hours after the whole town was up and stirring, with sick stomach and aching head, he rose, declaring that something he had eaten at dinner had disagreed with him, and that he must have a small portion of strong waters to promote digestion. He was as morose, too, through the whole day, as a sick tiger, and would not stir beyond the doors till after he had dined. He was angry with the maid, rude to the landlady, assuring her that she was "a vessel of wrath," and, above all, irritable, and even fierce, with Arrah Neil.

Though it is probable that he had no cause of any kind for suspicion, yet his mind was in that state of sullen discontent from bodily suffering that gives rise to incessant jealousy. He prowled about the door of her room; sent for her twice down to the little parlour between breakfast and dinner; looked out whenever he heard a door open; and twice stopped Mrs. White when she was going up stairs, upon the pretence of asking some question. The last time this occurred, his inquiry once more was after Mr. Hugh O'Donnell.

"Really, sir, I have not been able to hear," replied Mrs. White; "but I dare say the governor, Sir John, could tell you."

"That will not do, woman," replied Mr. Dry, pettishly; "I only seek to hold communion with the godly of the land. How can I tell that this Sir John Hotham is any better than an uncircumcised Philistine? Though he have taken a part with the righteous in behalf of this poor country, peradventure it may be but with an eye to the spoil."

"Goodness, sir, think of what you are saying in Hull!" exclaimed Mrs. White, giving a glance to some of the by-standers; "you may get yourself into trouble if you speak so of the governor."

"Nay, woman, am I not called to lift up my voice, and spare not?" rejoined Mr. Dry; "is this a time for showing a respect to persons? Verily, I will take up a word against them."

"Well, then, I am sure I will not stay to hear it," replied the landlady; and away she went, leaving Mr. Dry to finish his exhortation to the maid, the ostler, and two townsmen, if he chose.

Shortly after, however, the dinner of the guest was served up to him, and gradually, under its influence, he was restored to a more placable state of mind, having sought the aid of sundry somewhat potent libations, which he termed supporting the inner man, but which Mrs. White denominated taking "a hair of the dog that had bit him."

As soon as he had satisfied both hunger and thirst, Mr. Dry took Arrah Neil back to her chamber again, and having locked the door, and sought his hat and cloak in his own room, he walked slowly down the stairs, resolved to pursue his perquisitions for Mr. Hugh O'Donnell in person; but, before he reached the door of the Swan, his tranquillity was much upset by the entrance of a bold, swaggering, joyous-looking person, whose very cheerfulness of face was offensive in the sight of the sour and sober Mr. Dry. He looked at him, then, with a glance of amazement and reprobation, and then, while our good friend Digory Falgate brushed past, raised his eyes towards heaven, as if inquiring whether such things as a blithe heart and cheerful countenance could be tolerated on earth.

Falgate instantly caught the look, and, as it unfortunately happened for Mr. Dry, recollected in him a personage whom he had seen in no very respectable plight in the streets of Hull the night before. He instantly paused, then, and, bursting into a laugh, began to sing the well-known old words—older than they are generally supposed to be—

"My wife Joan's a Presbyterian,
She won't swear, but she will lie;
I to the ale-house! she to the tavern!
She'll get drunk as well as I!"

And, ending with another laugh, he walked on to Mrs. White's little room.

The wrath of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was overpowering, but it could not find vent in words; and, after once more lifting up his eyes, and his hands also, he hurried out of the house, resolved that, if he stayed beyond the following day in Hull, he would quit an inn where such godless people were permitted to pass the door.

We will not pursue him on his track through the town, but return to poor Arrah Neil, whose day, as we have said, had passed in anxiety and pain; and she sat with her hand beating time upon the table to some fancied tune, as the sun sunk lower and lower, and the hues of evening began to spread over the sky.

As she thus sat, she saw Mr. Dry walk away from the door, cross over the street, and enter a house opposite. He turned before he went in, and looked up at the windows of the Swan, but Arrah Neil was in one of those meditative moods, when the spirit seems to be separate from the body, or scarcely conscious of a connexion between the two. She saw the man she so much hated and despised gaze up to where she was sitting; but in thinking of him and his baseness—of the power he had obtained over her—of his perseverance in maintaining that power—of how she could escape from him, and whither he could now be going, she seemed to forget altogether that it was upon her his eyes were turned, and without moving her place she remained watching him, as if he were a mere piece of mechanism, whose springs and whose wheels were wor-

thy of observation, but incapable of observation in return. It was the best course she could have pursued, though she did so unconsciously; for, after Mr. Dry had been a minute or two in the house which he entered, he came out again, and, seeing her still sitting there unmoved with her eyes fixed upon the same spot, he muttered, "The girl is a fool, that's clear!" and went on about his business.

Other eyes had been watching him as well as those of Arrah Neil, and before he had actually quitted the street, the step of Mrs. White was heard upon the stairs. But, ere the good landlady could reach the top, the voice of Nancy from below exclaimed, "Here's a gentleman, ma'am, wants to speak to you!"

Arrah waited for a moment or two, in the hope that the new guest would depart, and that the hostess would pay her the accustomed visit; for, in those moments of anxious expectation and suspense, she felt the presence of any sympathizing human creature a benefit and a relief. But after a while she turned to gaze from the window again, and murmured—for she did not sing—some lines of an old song which she had learned in her infancy. As she thus sat, she heard another step upon the stairs, slower and more heavy than that of the landlady, and without giving it a second thought, she returned to sport with her own fancies, when a key was put into the lock, and the door opened.

Arrah Neil started and turned round, and not a little was her surprise to see a tall, powerful, elderly man, with white hair, and deep blue eyes, the long lashes of which were still black, enter her chamber, fasten the door behind him, and advance towards her. She was a little frightened, and would have been more so, but there was a kindly and gentle air in the visitor's countenance which was not calculated to produce alarm; and as he came nearer, he said, "I beg your pardon, young lady, but I much wished to see you. I have not seen you for many a long year—not since you were quite a little thing."

"Then you knew me in my childhood, sir," exclaimed Arrah, eagerly, "and—"

"You may well say that, lady," replied Hugh O'Donnell, before she could proceed; "these arms were the first that received you when you set foot upon this shore. Oh, a sorrowful landing was it, and sorrowful was the fate that followed, and sorrowful were the days that went before; and there has been little but sorrow since. But good luck to to-morrow, it may bring something brighter, and the sky won't be overcast forever, that's impossible."

"Then you are the Mister O'Donnell of whom Mrs. White has told me," cried Arrah. "Oh, sir, I beseech you, tell me more about myself and my kindred. Whosoever child I am, let me know it. If a peasant's, say so without fear; I would rather cast away the vain but bright dreams that have haunted me so long, and fix my best affections on the memory of some good plain people, than have this wild doubt and uncertainty any longer—tell me—tell me—any thing, if it be not disgraceful to the living or the dead."

"Disgraceful!" cried Hugh O'Donnell; "I should like to hear any man say that. No, no, there's nothing disgraceful, my darling; but I cannot, and I must not tell you all that I could wish, young lady—not just at present, that is to say. By-and-by you will hear all."

"And, in the mean time, what misfortunes

may befall me," said Arrah Neil, in an earnest tone, "what misfortunes have already befallen me, which perhaps might have been averted."

"Why, that is true too," replied O'Donnell, after a moment's thought; "and yet it could not be helped. What to do now I cannot rightly tell; for, from what the good woman below says, old Neil, when he was dying, wished you to know all."

"I am sure he did," answered the poor girl, "but they had swept the cottage of every thing, and I much fear that the papers he wished me to have fell into the hands of this base old man."

"Ay, you must be got out of his clutches: that's the first thing," said O'Donnell. "On my life, if there were any thing like law in the land, we would make him prove before the justices what right he has to meddle with you—his ward, indeed! But, alas! young lady, there is neither law nor justice left in England, and the simple word of that cropeared knave would weigh down the oaths of a whole host of what they call malignants. The only way to follow is for you to get away secretly, and put yourself under the care of those who have been already kind to you. You are very willing to go back to Lord Walton and his sister, I suppose?"

"Oh, that I am!" cried Arrah Neil, with the warm colour mounting in her fair cheek; but the next moment she cast her eyes thoughtfully down, and murmured, "and yet—and yet—"

"Yet what, young lady?" asked O'Donnell, seeing that she did not conclude her sentence.

"Nothing," replied Arrah Neil; "'tis but a vain regret. When I was in poverty and beggary, they were generous and kind to me; and at times, when I schooled myself to think that such must have been my original situation, notwithstanding the idle dreams of brighter days that came back to trouble me, I used to fancy that I could be well content to be their lowest servant, so that I might follow and be with them always. But since I came hither, and the memories of the past grew clear, and the mistress of this house confirms I think, I have been thinking that, perhaps, before I returned to those two kind and noble friends, I might learn all my own fate and history, and be able to tell them that, when they condescended to notice and protect a being so lowly and humble as I was when they found me, they were unknowingly showing a kindness to one not so far inferior in blood to themselves as they had imagined."

"And, by the Lord, you shall be able to tell them so," cried O'Donnell; "for proud as they may be, I can tell them—"

"Oh, no!" cried Arrah, interrupting him, "they are not proud—neither was it from any pride that I wished to tell them that poor Arrah Neil was not the lowly being they had thought; for they were so gentle and so kind that dependence on them was sweet; but I wished them to understand how it was, and why, that I have been so strange and wild at times—so thoughtful—and yet there may have been pride," she added, after a moment's pause, fixing her eyes upon the ground, and speaking as if to herself. "I would not have him think me so low—so very low. But you said I should be able to tell them. Speak, speak; let me hear what it is!"

"Well, then," replied Hugh O'Donnell, "you may tell them there is—"

But, ere he could go on, Mrs. White ran into the room, exclaiming, "He is coming, he is

coming! Nancy sees him at the end of the street. Quick, quick, Master O'Donnell."

"Oh, speak, speak," cried Arrab.

"I will see you again, dear lady," cried O'Donnell, quickly; "I will come with the horses myself. But, in the mean time, this money belongs to you—it may be needful—it may be serviceable—do not let him see it," and, laying a small leathern purse upon the table, he hurried towards the door. Before he quitted the room, however, he turned, and seeing the poor girl's beautiful eyes filled with tears, he added, "Do not be afraid; I will see you again before his time to-morrow."

The landlady of the Swan and her visiter hurried down to the little parlour, but, as so often happens when people are taken by surprise, they made more haste than was necessary; for whether Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, met with something to detain him, or whether he walked slowly as he came down the street, he did not make his appearance on the steps leading up to the inn for several minutes after they had descended.

"I will speak with this man, Mistress White," said O'Donnell, after a moment's thought. "Tell him that I have come to see him—that you sent for me by some one who knew where to find me."

"Are you sure that is a good plan?" asked the landlady. "We want time to get the young ady away."

"Never fear! never fear!" replied her companion. "I will keep him in play for a week, if need be."

"Well, well," said Mrs. White; and while O'Donnell took a seat and leaned his cheek upon his arm, as if waiting patiently for some one's coming, the good landlady bustled about, making a noise among bottles and measures, with as unconcerned an air as she could assume.

The next minute Mr. Dry walked solemnly up the four steps which led from the street to a little flat landing-place of stone, encircled with an iron railing, which lay without the door; and as soon as he thus became apparent, Mrs. White ran out of her parlour, exclaiming, "Sir, sir, the gentleman you wished to see is come. The man who brings the eels called a few minutes ago, and as he knew where to find him, I bade him tell Mr. O'Donnell to come and see you."

"That was right! that was right!" cried Mr. Dry, with his small red eyes sparkling with satisfaction. "Where is he, Mistress White?"

"Here, sir, in the bar," answered the landlady; and with a slow and solemn step, calculating how he was to proceed, and smoothing its face down to its usual gravity, Mr. Dry walked deliberately into the little room where Hugh O'Donnell was seated.

"Here is Mister Dry, sir," said the hostess, opening the door for him; but Mr. Dry waved his hand pompously for silence, and then considered Mr. O'Donnell attentively.

"This good lady tells me you wish to speak with me, sir," said O'Donnell, after giving the newcomer quite sufficient time to inspect his countenance; "pray what may be your business with me?"

"It is of a private nature, Master O'Donnell," replied Mr. Dry, "and may, perhaps, be better explained at your own house than here, if you will tell me where that is."

O'Donnell smiled and shook his head. "I am

not fond of private business at my own house, sir," he answered, dryly. "These are suspicious times: people will be for calling me malignant, or something of that kind. I am a plain man, sir—an honest, open merchant, and not fond of secrets. If you have any thing to say, I can hear it here."

"Well, then, come into this neighbouring room, my good friend," replied Dry; "to that you can have no objection; and as to being charged with malignancy, methinks the conversation of Ezekiel Dry, of Longsoaken, would never bring such an accusation upon any man's head."

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know you," replied O'Donnell, following towards the little room where Mr. Dry had dined after his first arrival. "I have heard of you from the people of Bishop's Merton, whom I occasionally supply with dry beef and neat's tongues from Ham-burgh."

"Pray be seated, Master O'Donnell," said Mr. Dry, closing the door carefully after they had entered; and then, taking a chair opposite to his companion, he went on with sundry hints and haws, interrupting his discourse, and giving him both time to think of what he was next to say, and to examine the countenance of O'Donnell as he proceeded.

"You must know, Mr. O'Donnell," he said, "that after the death of a certain old man—a clear and undoubted malignant—named Sergeant Neil—hum—with whom I think you have had a good deal to do—ha."

"Very little, sir," replied O'Donnell, as he paused; "I had to pay him some money every year, sent to me by my correspondents beyond sea—I should think the man was somewhat of a malignant, from some of his letters on the receipt."

"Verily was he, and a most ferocious one too," replied Mr. Dry; "but after the death of this person, I, with the consent and appointment of the authorities—hum—took upon me the care and protection of the girl supposed to be his grand-daughter—hum—his grand-daughter as she was called—I say, Master O'Donnell—ha."

"Very kind of you, indeed, sir," answered O'Donnell, "especially as old Neil could not die rich."

"As poor as a rat," replied Mr. Dry, emphatically; "pray what was it you paid him per annum, Master O'Donnell?"

"About fifty pounds a year, as far as I recollect," said O'Donnell, "but I cannot exactly tell till I look in my books."

"That was but a small sum," rejoined Dry, "for taking care of this girl, when her family are so wealthy and the estate so great—ha."

"Are they, sir?" asked O'Donnell, in an indifferent tone. "Pray whereabouts do they lie?"

"Come, come, Master O'Donnell," cried Mr. Dry, with a significant nod, "you know more than you pretend to know—hum. We have found letters and papers—hum—which show that you have full information—ha—and it is necessary that you should speak openly with me—hum. Do you understand me?—ha."

"Oh, I understand quite well, sir," replied O'Donnell, not in the least discomposed; "my letters were all upon business. I sent the money—I announced the sending—I asked for my receipts; and whenever there was a word or two sent over to forward, such as, 'All is well!' 'Things going on better!' or any thing of that

sort, I wrote them down just as I received them, without troubling my head about what they referred to."

Mr. Dry was somewhat puzzled how to proceed; whether to take the high and domineering tone that he had often found very successful at Bishop's Merton, or to cajole and bribe, as he had had occasion to do at other times; but, after a little reflection, he determined that the latter would be the best course at first, as he could always have recourse to the former, which, if employed too soon, and without due caution, might lead to more publicity than was at all desirable.

"Now listen to me, Master O'Donnell," he said at length; "you are a wise man, and prudent, not to confide your secrets to strangers; but it is of vast importance that the true rank, station, fortune, family, and connexions of this young woman should be clearly ascertained, and though, perhaps, you may not like to say at once, 'I know this,' or 'I know that,' yet I ask you, can you not secretly and quietly get me information upon all these matters—if I make it worth your while to take the trouble—well worth your while—very well worth your while?"

"That is another matter," answered O'Donnell, "quite another matter, sir; but the question is, what would make it worth my while? I'm a merchant, sir, and we must make it a matter of trade."

Mr. Dry pondered; but before he could answer, Mr. O'Donnell added, "Come, Master Dry, let me hear distinctly what it is you want to know, and then I can better judge how much it is worth."

"That I will tell you immediately," rejoined Mr. Dry, feeling in his pocket; and at length, drawing forth the bundle of papers which Captain Barecolt had examined the night before, he began to read, "Habakkuk, two, five: 'Yea also because he transgresseth in wine'—no, that is not it—and besides, it was not wine, but strong waters—Ah, here it is;" and he proceeded to read to his companion the series of questions which the worthy captain above-named had warned Mr. O'Donnell would be addressed to him.

"A goodly list!" said the Irishman, in a tone that Mr. Dry did not think very promising; but he went on immediately to add, "Well, I think all this information I could obtain, if it were made worth my while—and a great deal more too; but you see, Mr. Dry, this is purely a mercantile transaction: you come to me for information as for goods."

"Certainly, certainly," replied he of Longsoaken; "it is all a matter of trade."

"Well, then," continued O'Donnell, "I must know to what market you intend to take the goods."

"I do not understand," said Mr. Dry.

"I'll explain it to you in a moment," replied the other; "I mean, what is your object? if it should be shown that the girl is different from what she seems—if fair and probable prospects of money and such good things should spring up, what do you intend to do with her?"

"That is a question I have not yet considered with due deliberation and counsel," replied Mr. Dry.

"But it is one well worth consideration," answered his companion; "in a word, Master Dry, do you intend to put the girl and her property under the protection, as it is called, of the law, or to give her another protector: your son—or yourself, perhaps?"

"What if I say to put her under the protection of the law?"

"Then I say you're a great goose for your pains," replied O'Donnell, rising, "and I'm afraid we can't deal. The law is a bad paymaster, and does not make it worth men's while to do it service or take trouble for it; and this would cost me a great deal of pains and work; now, if you had made up your mind to marry her quietly and secretly to your son, or any near relation, it would be a different affair, and you would not mind giving a good per centage."

"I have no son—I have no near relations," replied Dry, somewhat pettishly; "but I shall not mind giving a good per centage, notwithstanding."

"Then of course you intend to marry her yourself," said O'Donnell; "well, that being the case, I will go home and consider between this and this hour to-morrow what I will take. I must make my calculations, for I am a man of my word, and like to know exactly what a thing is worth before I put a price upon it; but by this time to-morrow I will tell you; so good-morning, Mr. Dry—it is getting late."

"But where shall I find you? where shall I find you?" cried Mr. Dry, as the other moved towards the door.

"Oh, Mrs. White will send a boy with you," replied O'Donnell; "she knows where it is now—good afternoon;" and, issuing forth, he spoke a word or two to the landlady, and then quitted the house, murmuring, "The old snake! I know them, those canting vipers—I know them."

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was ten o'clock at night; the town was dark and silent, the streets empty, and the windows generally closed, when Diggory Falgate advanced with a light, gay step through various narrow ways towards the block-house where the Earl of Beverley was confined. He was followed at the distance of about a hundred yards by Ancient Hazard of the train-banda, and a short distance behind him came Captain Barecolt, with the silent step but wide stride of one well-accustomed to dangerous enterprises. The foremost of the party, we have said, advanced lightly and gayly with that sort of braggadocio air which characterized the Cavaliers in almost all their undertakings, and which—or, rather, the foolish self-confidence of which it was the mere outward expression—ruined so many of their best-concerted plans. Ancient Hazard, however, as he walked along, displayed a very different aspect. He was somewhat afraid of the business in hand, and, though resolved to carry it through, his head turned almost involuntarily to right or left at every step, thinking that some one must be watching him, though the only suspicions that existed anywhere regarding his conduct were those in his own heart. Barecolt, on the contrary, though as likely as any man, from natural disposition, to make as much noise about whatever he did as was necessary, and perhaps somewhat more, was too much habituated to enterprises of this kind to be particularly excited on the occasion, and his vanity took the direction of affecting to look upon it as a matter, of course, so commonplace and easy, that it allowed him to think of anything else; and he therefore followed with his eyes bent upon the

ground, noticing, apparently, nothing that passed around him.

The first and, indeed, only obstruction that presented itself to their progress towards the block-house was offered by the watch, who, encountering good Diggory Falgate, carrying, it must be remarked, a small bundle under his arm, and not particularly approving of the jaunty air with which he gave them good-night, thought fit to stop him, and, in Shakespeare's words, "prate of his whereabouts."

Falgate was always ready to cry clubs, and strongly disposed to resist the watch when it could be done with the slightest probability of success; so that a very pretty quarrel was commencing, which might soon have conveyed him to prison, or the cage, had not Hazard come to his support and informed the worthy guardians of the night that the captive of their hands was his poor neighbour Falgate the painter, who was not an ill-disposed man, though somewhat inclined to moisten his clay with more than a sufficient quantity of strong beer; and he, moreover, hinted that such might be the case on that very night.

This assurance proved so far satisfactory that the watch thought fit to let him go with a suitable admonition, and Hazard acting his part better when he grew warm in the matter, bade Diggory, in a rough tone, go on about his business and not make breils in the streets, or he would get himself into mischief.

This said, the whole party proceeded on their way, resuming as soon as possible the same order of march as before, and Captain Barecolt, with his grave and serious demeanour, passing the watch without question.

About five minutes after, Diggory emerged into the open space by the river side, and advancing straight towards the block-house, entered into conversation with the guard. What was said at first was in a low tone, but presently the sound of the voices grew louder and louder; angry words reached the corner of the street behind which Ancient Hazard had concealed himself; and, running across, he came up just in time to prevent the sentinel from knocking down the painter with the butt-end of his piece. The plan agreed upon was now fully carried out; the ancient of the train-bands, while threatening Falgate sharply with the stocks and the prison, was still more severe upon the sentinel, and commanded him immediately to march back to the guard-house and send down the next upon the roll. He would keep guard while the other was gone, he said; and the man, giving up his musket, walked away, proceeding about fifty yards towards the opposite buildings before he recollected the orders of the governor, to keep all persons at a distance from the spot where he was in conference with the prisoner. He accordingly paused, and Hazard, who had been watching him closely, walked up, asking why he stopped when he had orders to go straight to the guard-house. The man excused himself, and transmitted the commands he had received from the governor, upon which his ancient desired him to go on, returning slowly towards the block-house.

By this time, however, Barecolt had run across in the darkness from the mouth of the opposite street, and, with Falgate behind him, was feeling over the door for the key which he had seen in the lock on the preceding morning. He found the keyhole, however, untenanted, and at that moment the exclamation burst from his

lips which had so much alarmed Sir John Hotham.

"They have taken the key out," he cried; "curse me if I don't force the lock off with my dagger;" and he was proceeding to act accordingly, when, to his surprise, the door was opened, the light broke forth from within, and Lord Beverley suddenly clapped his hand upon his mouth, whispering, "No! a word of recognition!" Then, in a louder tone, he demanded, "Who, and what do you seek here, sir?"

Barecolt, for a single instant, was puzzled as to whether he should speak French or English; but Lord Beverley had used nothing but the latter tongue, and he replied in the same, while with open eyes he seemed to demand farther explanation: "I was seeking some one, whom, it seems, I am not likely to find."

"You may look in, sir—you will see no one here," answered the earl, and Barecolt gave a hurried look round, saw the curtain of the bed on the opposite side drawn forward, and with a wink of the eye, gave the royal officer to understand that he began to comprehend.

"That is enough," continued the earl, assuming somewhat suddenly a foreign accent; "you are now satisfied; go away."

Barecolt instantly withdrew a step; but the earl followed him, and added, in a whisper, "You seem at liberty—I shall be so soon; out of the town as fast as you can, and either wait for me on the road to York, as near as is safe, or tell the king all that has happened, and that I will rejoin him soon, I trust, with good news."

Thus saying, he drew back, shut the door, and locked it, as before, in the inside.

Captain Barecolt laid his finger on the side of his nose. "Here is something going on here," he said to himself. "Well, I will obey orders; it is not my fault if his lordship will not get out of the mousetrap. Now, Master Falgate—now, Master Hazard, let us be off as fast as we can to the Swan."

"I must stay here till the guard comes," answered Hazard, in a low tone. "Why, what is all this? The sentry said something about the governor. Will not the prisoner come out?"

"No," replied Barecolt, "he would rather stay in; nevertheless, as he is a wise man, Master Hazard, doubtless he has his reasons. Well, follow us to the Swan as quickly as you can, and we will talk more."

"I will, I will," answered Hazard; "away with you, quick: if any one were to come and find you here with me, I were ruined."

Barecolt and Falgate hurried on, and in about five minutes reached the Swan, the door of which was partly shut; but, the moment they approached, the servant-girl Nancy put forth her head, saying, "Go up to your room, sir, quick: the old man is below; Dame White told me to say so."

"Thanks, Nancy," replied Barecolt; and, contriving to conceal his face with his cloak, he crossed the passage, and, followed by Falgate, walked up the stairs. In the room of the worthy captain they found a light burning, and Falgate, laying down his bundle upon the table, asked, "Well, sir, what is the matter? Where does the pulley hitch? When men have the door open, why won't they walk out?"

"Good faith, I cannot tell any more than what is in that bundle," observed Barecolt.

"That you shall soon be able to tell," replied Falgate. "It is all my worldly goods and chattels, sir. I am going with you to join the king."

"A good resolution," replied Barecolt, abruptly; "pray, Master Falgate, have you money to buy a horse? A man is nothing without a horse, you know."

"Ay, that I have," replied the painter; "but where to get one is the question."

"Let not that embarrass you," rejoined Barecolt, with a well-satisfied and patronising air. "A man of action and experience, like myself, is never unprovided. I will find you one between this and Newlands."

Falgate admired with such evident satisfaction, that Barecolt treated him to a story of his adventures once in the Carpathian Mountains, where the safety of himself and his whole company was secured by his having taken the precaution to put a thimble in his pocket. Before this was concluded, they were joined by Ancient Hazard, whose watch had passed undisturbed till he was relieved by another of the train-bands; and the three remained near an hour together, and partook of some of the landlady's good wine. Hazard then issued forth, and consultations manifold took place between Mrs. White and Barecolt; after which, the good lady paid a furtive visit to poor Arrah Neil, for by this time, Master Dry, of Longsaken, had retired to rest. There were then farther conferences in the room of Barecolt, and at length the inn sunk into repose.

About half an hour before daybreak, however, four persons silently assembled in the hall; few words were spoken; but good Mrs. White, with a tear in her eye at the thoughts of other days, kissed the cheek of the fair girl, who leaned trembling on the arm of Barecolt. The door was quietly unbolted, and opened; three of the party went out, and the fourth retiring, closed it after them. The others walked slowly on towards the gate of the town, and just as they approached, the faint dawn of day began to give light to the streets.

"Give the young lady your arm, Master Painter," said Barecolt, "and answer to whatever I say to you, that you will set about it whenever you have seen the young woman to Newlands."

Falgate, who was now in his working dress, nodded his head, and gave his arm for Arrah's support, while Barecolt advanced to the gate, and giving the word with which he had been furnished, ordered the wicket to be opened in an authoritative tone. It had not the full success he could have wished, however, for the man would do nothing farther than call his officer, so that some five minutes were lost. At length, however, the officer appeared, and as he had seen our worthy captain on the day before, and examined his pass, no farther difficulties were made in his case. In regard to Falgate, however, the matter was different, and he was asked in a surly and somewhat suspicious tone whether he was going so early in the morning.

"He be coming wid me to see one thing there be to do at de nort end of de curtain," said Barecolt; "but all you English have too much to do wid de girl, and he say he cannot do it till he be come back from Newlands; but you remember, sair," he added, turning to Falgate, "if I find you not about it by seven of de clock, I turn you off."

"I will set about it, sir, as soon as I have seen the young woman to Newlands," replied Falgate, bobbing his head; and the whole party passed out of the gates, which were closed behind them.

"Now go on, and wait for me at the first little public house you come to," whispered Captain Barecolt, as soon as he and his companions had passed the gates of Hull; "I will not be a minute;" and, turning away underneath the wall which at that time surrounded the city, he appeared with a shrewd eye to be examining the fortifications. Lucky it was for him that he did so; for, the moment after, the officer of the guard having been roused somewhat early from his slumber, and thinking it unnecessary to go to bed again, sauntered forth to enjoy the breeze of the morning, and to observe what the strange captain was about. No sooner did our worthy friend, giving a backward glance towards the gates, perceive that he was watched, than, without a moment's deliberation, he beckoned the officer up to him, and addressed him when he approached with a torrent of engineering terms, some in French, some in English, some in a language compounded of the two.

"Begar," he cried, after having vented a great deal of learning upon the incomprehensible ears of his auditor, "I not able to tell what de governor will have do here. Look, sair, look! my good friend, if I be not much mistake, dat hill dere, not above one half mile off, command de bastion all along. Let me beseech you have de bounty to take von leetle walk up to de top of de hill. Den wid one stick making a level, so see if de line do not cover de top of de curtain—'c'est a dire,' if it do not 'domine' it. You understand?"

"Oh, yes! I understand quite well," replied the officer of the train-bands; "but I'll tell you what, captain, you must go yourself, for I cannot leave the guard."

"Sapristi, dat be true," said Barecolt, turning away, and walking towards the slight elevation he had pointed out. The officer of the guard watched him for a moment, as with his usual dignified stride he walked on towards the hill, and then turning back again to the gates, entered, causing them once more to be closed behind him.

Barecolt paused when he reached the top of the rise, and, turning round, examined the town of Hull, but more especially the gate from which he had issued forth, making sundry *gesticulations*, as if he were endeavouring to ascertain the relative height of the hill and the fortifications, suspecting that some one might be observing him still. In doing so, however, he scanned every nook and corner with a curious eye, and, having satisfied himself that he was not watched, turned sharply to the left, regained the road along which Falgate and Arrah Neil had taken their way, and, covered by a small clump of trees which grew near at that time, hurried on with long steps towards the little public house which Hugh O'Donnell had mentioned.

The pace at which he went was so rapid, that, notwithstanding the interruption he had met with, he came in sight of the little solitary house just at the moment that Arrah and her companion reached it. There was a tall man standing at the door; and the next instant, before Captain Barecolt came up, three horses were led out by a man and a boy, and the worthy captain could see his Irish acquaintance, Mr. O'Donnell, lift the fair girl upon one of the beasts, and then, approaching his head close to her ear, ap-

pear to whisper to her eagerly for several moments.

Whatever was the nature of his communication, it was just over when Captain Barecolt laid his hand upon his shoulder, and Mr. O'Donnell only added the words,

"Remember, to none but himself, or her."

He then turned to Captain Barecolt, exclaiming,

"Quick, quick upon your horse's back, and away."

"Oh! there's no such haste, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt, who loved not to receive the word of command from a merchant. "Nothing but cowardice is ever in a hurry; so what is to pay for the horses, my friend?"

"Seventeen pounds for that," replied O'Donnell, pointing to one, "and two-and-twenty pounds for the other, which you had better mount yourself, lest your long legs touch the ground. They are cheap."

"Cheap or dear, they must be paid for," replied Barecolt, "and they don't seem bad beasts either. Come, Master Falgate, bring forth the crowns—you see, having short legs saves you five pounds;" and while the worthy painter unfolded his bundle, in which were now contained such parts of Barecolt's goods and chattels as he thought it absolutely necessary to take with him, the captain drew forth a leathern purse and disbursed the sum required for his own beast, which operation, to say the truth, left his pocket but scantily garnished.

"Now mount, mount, Master Falgate," continued Barecolt. "T'other side of your horse, man, and t'other foot in the stirrup, or we shall have you with your face to the tail. Now, Mistress Arrah, are you ready?"

But when he turned to look at her, Arrah Neil had fallen into one of her deep fits of abstraction, and he had to repeat the question before she roused herself.

"Yes, yes!" she answered, with a start, "I am ready;" and then, turning to O'Donnell, added, "I remember it all now. That name, like the sudden drawing of a curtain, has let in the light upon memory, and I see the past."

"God speed you, young lady," replied O'Donnell; "but now hasten upon your way, and I will take mine; for it will not be long ere your flight is discovered, and before that I hope I shall be in my house, and you many miles hence."

Thus saying, he waved his hand, and Barecolt, striking his horse with his heel, led the way along the road at a quick pace. Arrah Neil followed, and was at his side in a moment; but good Digory Falgate, who seemed less accustomed to equestrian exercise than either of his companions, was not a little inconvenienced by the trotting of his horse. Merciless Captain Barecolt, however—though, to tell the truth, he saw the difficulty with which their companion followed them at a still increasing distance—kept up the same rapid rate of progression for some six or seven miles, speaking now and then a word or two to his fair companion, but showing wonderful abstinence from his usual frailty. At length they reached the top of a long, sloping hill, which commanded a view over a wide extent of country behind them, and along at least one half of the road they had followed from Hull; and, turning his horse for a moment or two, Captain Barecolt paused and examined the track beneath his eyes, to see if he could discover any

signs of pursuit. All was clear, however; the sun, now risen a degree or two above the horizon, but still red and large from the horizontal mist through which it shone, cast long shadows from tree, and house, and village spire over the ground in some places, and in others bright gleams of rosy light; but almost all the world seemed still slumbering, for no moving object was to be seen on the road, and nothing even in the fields around but where a team of horses, driven slowly by a whistling ploughman, at about a hundred yards upon the left of the party on the hill, wended slowly onward to commence their labours for the day.

"You may go a little slower now, young lady," said Barecolt, after he had concluded his examination; "we have a good start of them, and I do not think they would venture to send out far in pursuit."

"Thank God!" answered Arrah Neil; not in the common tone of satisfaction with which those words are usually pronounced, but with the voice of heartfelt gratitude to Him from whom all deliverance comes. "But do you think we are really safe?" continued Arrah, after a moment's thought. "Perhaps it would be better to go on quickly for a time; but that good man who came with us seems hardly able to make his horse keep up with us."

"Then we will make him lead as soon as he comes up," answered Barecolt; "we can follow at his pace, for I think we are secure enough just now. The truth is, he is evidently unaccustomed to a horse's back, and sis his beast like a London tapster in a city pageant. 'Tis a lamentable thing, Mistress Arrah, that so few people in this country ever learn to ride. Now, before I was twelve years old, there was not a *pas* of the *manège* that I could not make the wildest horse perform; and serviceable indeed have I found it in my day; for I remember well when the small town of *Aiais* was taken, which I had aided to defend, with twenty other gentlemen of different nations, we determined that we would have nothing to do with the capitulation, and on the morning when the king's troops were just about to march into the town, we issued forth to cut our way out, or to find it through them in some manner. We had not gone above three hundred yards from the gate, when we found a line of pikemen drawn up across the road and in a meadow. There were no other troops on that side of the town, for the chief attack was at another point; but, as soon as they saw us, down went their pikes, when, crying to the rest, 'Now, gentlemen, follow me,' I dashed up to them as if to charge. I was mounted on a swift and powerful horse—I called him Drake, in memory of the great Sir Francis—but, just as I was at the point of their pikes, I lifted him on his haunches, struck my spurs into his flanks, and with one spring, over the line he went."

"And what became of the rest?" asked Arrah Neil.

"You shall hear," replied Barecolt. "The horse, as he came over, lashed out behind, and, striking one of the pikemen on the head, dashed in his steel cap and his scull together, so that down he went, and my friends charging on, cut a way for a part of themselves before the confusion was over. Five got through and joined me, but the rest had to eat cold steel."

"They were killed?" asked Arrah Neil.

"Alas! war is a sad thing."

"Very true," replied Barecolt; "but one comes to think of it as nothing. It is the occupation of brave men and gentlemen; and when one makes up one's mind every day to lose one's life if need be, we do not think much of seeing others go a few hours before us. If I could call up again all the men I have seen killed since I first smelt powder, when I was about fifteen, I should have a pretty strong army of ghosts to fight the Roundheads with. Well, Master Falgate," he continued, as the painter came up, "you seem red in the face and out of breath."

"Ugh! there never was such a beast," cried Falgate. "It is like riding a rhinoceros. He has as many hard knobs in him as a cow, and his pace is like a galloping earthquake. Oons, captain, you go so fast, too."

"Well, my good friend, tell me," said Barecolt, "did you ever take a journey on a horse before?"

"No," replied Falgate, boldly, "or I do not think I should ever have got on one again. But in pity, good Captain Barecolt, don't go at such a rate, or, faith, you must leave me behind, which would not be like a good camarado."

"No, no, we won't leave you behind, Falgate," replied Barecolt, "and for that reason we will make you go first. So shall we be ready to pick you up if you fall off; and you can go at your own pace, though it must be the quickest you can manage."

"Oh, butter and eggs forever!" cried Falgate, patting himself in the van, and going on at a jog-trot; "if an old market-woman can keep her seat and not break her eggs, I do not see why one of the lords of the creation should tumble off and crack his bones."

"Nor I either," replied Barecolt; "and if he do, he deserves to break his head. But get on a little faster, Master Falgate, or we shall have the fat citizens of Hull at our heels."

"Oh, no fear! no fear!" rejoined Falgate; "they are all miraculous horsemen, and ride as well as I do: so, unless the governor pursues you in person, and brings all the horses out of his own stable, you may ride to York and back before any of them will stir. Would that the man who sold me this horse were in as sore a skin as he who bought it," he continued, after a short pause; "I am sure he must have had an ill will at my poor bones, plague light upon him!"

"Ah, no," cried Arrah Neil. "He is a good and a kind man."

"He is a very close one," replied Barecolt; "for I know, young lady, I tried my best yesterday to worm out of him all the secrets that we wanted to know, but he held his mouth as tight shut as the shell of an oyster."

"He had a reason, doubtless," answered Arrah Neil, falling into thought again.

"Well, if he have told you all about it," rejoined Barecolt, assuming an indifferent air, "it does not matter. I have no curiosity. Only, when we wish to send despatches securely, we give a copy to two separate messengers; and if, as I understood him, you are to tell Lord Walton or the young lady, it might have been better to inform me too, as then I could have carried them the intelligence in case of our being separated and of my seeing them first."

"Perhaps it might have been better," said Arrah Neil; "but all promises are sacred things, and, methinks, more especially promises to the dead."

"Ay, that they are," answered Barecolt, who saw that he was not likely to learn from his fair

companion what had been the substance of her conversation with O'Donnell, "ay, that they are. I remember a very curious and entertaining story about that which happened at the siege of a certain town, when I was serving in the North. I will tell it to you as we go; it will serve to while away the time."

CAPTAIN BARECOLT'S STORY.

"There is a little town called *Le Catelet* just upon the French frontier, which was besieged by the Spanish army after the French had taken it and held it for about a year. The attack began in the winter, and a number of honourable gentlemen threw themselves into it to aid in the defence as volunteers. Among the rest were two friends who had fought in a good many battles together, and one was called the Viscount de Boulaye, and the other the Capitaine la Vacherie. Every day there were skirmishes and sallies, and one night, when they were sitting drinking and talking together, after a very murderous sortie, Capitaine la Vacherie said to his friend, "How cold those poor fellows must be whom we left dead in the trenches to-day!"

"Ay, that they must," said Boulaye; 'and, 'pon my life, La Vacherie, I am glad the place is so full that you and I have but one room and one bed between us, otherwise I know not how we should keep ourselves warm.'

"Nor I either," replied La Vacherie. 'Mind, Boulaye, if I am some day left in the trenches, you come and look for me, and bring me out of the cold wind.'

"He spoke laughing, and the viscount answered in the same way,

"That I will, La Vacherie; don't you be afraid.'

"Well, about a fortnight after, the Spaniards attempted to storm the place; but they were driven back after fighting for near an hour, and Boulaye and La Vacherie, with the regiment of Champagne, pursued them to their intrenchments. Boulaye got back safe and sound to the town just as it was growing dark, and went to the governor's house and talked for an hour over the assault, and then returned to his room, and asked his servant if Capitaine la Vacherie had come back. The man answered no; and so Boulaye swore that he would be hanged if he would wait for his supper. Well, when supper came and La Vacherie did not, the viscount began to think, 'I should not wonder if that poor devil, La Vacherie, had left his bones outside,' and, after he had eaten two or three mouthfuls, and drunk a glass or two of wine, he sent the servant to the quarters of the regiment of Champagne, to see if he could hear any thing of his friend. But the servant could find no one who knew any thing of him; and when he came back, he found the viscount sitting with the table and the wine upon his right hand, and his feet upon the two andirons, with a warm fire of wood blazing away before him. When he told him that he could learn nothing, Boulaye exclaimed,

'Sacrement! I dare say he is killed—poor fellow, I am very sorry,' and he filled himself another glass of wine, and kept his foot on the andirons. In about half an hour more he went to bed, and just as he was getting comfortable and beginning to doze, seeing the fire flickering against the wall one minute and not seeing it the next, he heard a step upon the stairs, and instantly recollected La Vacherie's, who came up singing and talking just as usual.

"Ah!" cried he, 'La Vacherie, is that you? I thought you had been killed.'

"The deuce you did, Boulaye," replied La Vacherie, and began to move about the bottles and glasses as if he were feeling for a candle to light it.

"Well, don't make a noise, there's a good man," said Boulaye, 'for I am tired, and have a good deal to do to-morrow.'

"I'm sure so have I," replied La Vacherie, 'so I'll go to bed at once.'

"Had you not better have some supper?" asked the viscount.

"No," replied his friend, 'I've had all the supper I want,' and, accordingly, he pulled off his clothes and lay down beside his comrade. But by that time the viscount was asleep, so that they had no farther conversation that night. The next morning, when Viscount de Boulaye woke, he found that La Vacherie had already risen and left his nightcap upon the pillow, and he did not see him again till night, for the enemy made several fierce attacks, and all the troops of the garrison were busy till sunset. Well, the viscount supped alone that night as before, and just as he got into bed, he heard La Vacherie's step again, and again he came in, and again he would eat no supper, but went to bed as before. The viscount, however, did not sleep so easily this night, for he thought there was something odd about his friend. So, after lying for about half an hour, he said, 'La Vacherie, are you asleep?'

"Not yet," replied La Vacherie, 'but I soon shall be.'

"Well, I want to ask you something," said Boulaye, turning himself sharp round, and as he did so, his hand came against La Vacherie's. It was like a bit of ice!

"Why, how cold you are," cried the viscount.

"And how can you expect me to be otherwise," asked La Vacherie, in a terrible voice, 'when you have left me out there in the trenches through two long January nights?' and that moment he jumped out of bed, threw open the window, and went off. His body was found next morning where he had been killed two days before."

Arrah Neil was silent, but Falgate, who, while riding on at his slow pace, had kept one ear always upon his companion's story, turned round and asked, "But what became of the viscount?"

"Why, when the town capitulated," replied Barecolt, "he went into a Capuchin convent, and was called Father Henry. But hark! There is the sound of a trumpet, by the Lord Harry! Gallop, Falgate, gallop! or I'll drive my sword through you;" and, at the same time, he drew the weapon, and pricked forward the horse of his companion with the point.

The galloway, for it deserved no higher title, started on, lashing out behind in a manner that had nearly sent the poor painter out of the saddle and over its head; but when once the beast was fairly started in a gallop, Falgate found his seat much more comfortable than at a trot, and away the whole party went, at full speed, over hill and dale for about a mile and a half, when suddenly, to Barecolt's surprise, the sound of the trumpet was again heard upon his left nearer than before. After pausing for a moment to listen, he made up his mind that, whatever body of men were near, they did not come from the side of Hull; but judging that, when escorting

treasure or a lady, he should best show his valour by discretion, the renowned captain turned sharp off from the high road down a lane to his right, and after having gone rather more than one mile in that direction, through pleasant rows of trees, without hearing any more of the sounds which had alarmed him, he pulled up at a house, from the front of which a pole bearing a garland protruded over the road, indicating that some sort of entertainment would there be found for wayfaring travellers.

"We will here water our horses, Mistress Arrah," he said; "and, keeping in mind that we may not find loyal subjects in every house, we will refresh the inner man with gravity and moderation;" and, assuming a sad and sanctimonious air, he addressed a dry-looking man who presented himself, asking if they could obtain wherewithal to strengthen themselves for their farther journey. A ready affirmative was given, and, aiding Arrah Neil from her horse, Barecolt led her in, and then, never forgetting his military habits, returned to see that the beasts were taken care of. The landlord followed him out, and the worthy captain continued to eye him with a considerate glance as he aided in washing the horses' mouths and taking out their bits. By the time this was accomplished, Barecolt's opinion of his companion was completely formed, and when the latter remarked, "You seem to have been riding very hard, master," he replied in a solemn tone, much to the astonishment of Diggory Falgate,

"Yea, verily have we, for the sound of a trumpet met our ears, and we feared, being few in number, to fall in with a party of the swaggering malignants who, we hear, are riding about the country. Wilt thou get them a little corn, my friend?"

"Right willingly, master," replied the host; "I see that thou art a godly man, and I am glad to serve thee."

The moment he was gone, Barecolt whispered to Falgate, who had remained silent partly from fatigue and partly from surprise, "We must cozen the crop-eared knave. Whine, cant, and look devout, Master Falgate, and forget your swagger if you can."

"By Saint Winifred," replied Falgate, "this rough beast has taken all the swagger out of me. I can hardly stand, captain."

"Well, get thee in," replied Barecolt, "and leave me to deal with him. The best thing for thee to do is to hold thy tongue; for if thou once openest thy mouth, we shall see some profane saint or other popping out, and marking thee for a malignant in a minute."

After remaining for some ten minutes more at the door, in slow and solemn converse with the host, Barecolt stalked into the house, and found Arrah Neil sitting with her beautiful head leaning on her fair hand, and her elbow resting on a table very respectably covered with provisions.

"Now let us to our meat," said Barecolt, "for we must be soon upon our way again."

Falgate was instantly settling himself upon a stool to fall to, without farther ceremony; but the captain gave him a grave, admonishing look, and standing before the table with his clasped hands resting on his stomach, and the two thumbs elevated towards his chin, begun a grace which had wellnigh exhausted the patience of Falgate before it was done, but which greatly edified the master of the house. After this was

concluded, they all sat down to meat; and Barecolt, who well knew that the portion of good things which the saintly men of his day allotted themselves was by no means small, carved away at the joints without any modesty, and loaded his own plate, among others, with a mess sufficient for an ogre.

Alas for the brief period of mundane felicity! Scarcely had three mouthfuls passed between his grinders, scarcely had one deep draught from the foaming tankard wetted his lips, when the sound of many horses' feet was heard, and the next instant the blast of a trumpet was heard before the door. The landlord, who, as was then very customary, had sat down to share the meal prepared for his guests, started up and ran out to the door, while Barecolt quietly approached the window and looked forth; then returning to the table, he whispered in a low voice to Digory Falgate and Arrah Neil, "A party of the drunken tapsters and pimpled-nosed serving men whom the Roundhead rebels call cavalry. Master Falgate, be as silent as a church mouse. I command you, and answer not more than a monosyllable, whatever is asked you."

"Are they from Hull?" demanded Arrah Neil, in a tone of alarm, as Barecolt resumed his seat and began to eat.

"No, I think not," replied the gallant captain; "but we shall soon see, for here come some of them along the passage;" and, as he spoke, the door of the room opened, giving admission to a stout, short-set man in a well-worn buff coat.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Parliamentarian looked at Captain Barecolt, and Captain Barecolt looked at the Parliamentarian. The former had a cynical sort of smile on his countenance, as if he recognised in the worthy captain a personage whom he had seen before under different circumstances; but Barecolt's face was a perfect blank—at least, if that which bore so prominent a gnomon could be called so. At all events, in expression it said nothing; there was not the slightest glance of recognition in his eyes, there was not the smallest curl of consciousness round his mouth. He looked full in the officer's face, with the stare of a stranger, for very nearly a minute, and then civilly asked him if he would not sit down and join their party.

"No, I thank you," replied the Parliamentarian, with the same sneering smile, "but I think I shall ask you to join ours."

"I am much obliged, my friend," replied Barecolt, without any change of countenance, "but I have nearly dined."

"Dined or not dined," rejoined the other, "you must come along with me."

"How now?" cried Barecolt, rising with a look of indignation; "I thought, from your look, that you were a God-fearing and worthy man; but if you be, as I now judge from your words, one of the malignant fomenters of strife in Israel, I tell thee thou art in the wrong part of the country to play thy pranks, even if thou hast a company of thy swaggering rakehell troopers at thy heels."

"Come, come," replied the other, "I am what I seem, and what you know me right well to be. Did you ever hear of a certain Captain Batten, sir? Were you ever at such a place as Bishop's Merton?"

"Of a Captain Batten I have heard was in London," replied Barecolt, bold I have seen him too, but you are not he the first place, he is a godly and well person, and, in the next place, I do not thee. Then, as for Bishop's Merton, name of it is naught, and snacks of it and popery."

"I am not Captain Batten, certainly, the other," but I was cornet of his troop you were at Bishop's Merton, and I you well along the road for forty more, after you had made him prisoner; have changed your dress, but I know your Captain Barecolt."

"Captain Barecolt!" cried our worth lifting up his hands and eyes with a look of astonishment and indignation; "am I have done with Captain Barecolt? The third time within these four days that been mistaken for that good-for-nothing less fellow. If ever I meet him, I will that nose of his, or he shall cut off my there may be no more mistaking betwixt us. However, sir, if you are really, as you cornet of Captain Batten's troop, I am meet you: there is my hand, and I am prepared to show you, to your satisfaction, I am not the swaggering malignant you for, but a poor officer of French extraction parents took refuge in this land during persecutions of those who fought as I do, cause of true faith and freedom of con-

My name is Jersval; and you must, me ly, have heard of it, as I have for the last months been assisting that worthy gentleman, Sir John Hotham, in strengthening fortifications of Hull."

The officer looked at him for a moment with a bewildered stare; for he thought he could have sworn to the person the man who had been pointed out to him many weeks before, as Captain Barecolt, notorious malignant, yet the captain's cool effrontery was so great as almost to overcome his belief. He was not convinced, indeed, was staggered; and being somewhat of a nature, he resolved to resist giving credence to mere assertions, however boldly made.

"Come, come," he said, "you say you give me proofs. Where are they? I know your face quite well. The proofs, the proof or you must away with me to Hull."

"Be that at your peril, sir," replied Barecolt, with an air of dignity. "I am travel business of importance for the governor will resist being stopped to the shedding of blood. As to the proofs, here they are. You perceive Sir John Hotham's signature," and spoke, he drew forth from his pocket that which he had obtained from the governor.

So well had he combined all the parts of his story, that every word in the passage exactly with what he had said before. He called therein the French officer, Captain Jersval, employed upon the fortifications; and authorities of the town and its dependants well as all persons well affected to the cause were enjoined to give him free passage, and assistance on all his lawful occasions. Parliamentarian, as he read, became more and more bewildered, and, indeed, somewhat doubtful of Captain Barecolt's identity. The lord also joined in on behalf of his guest.

vouched for, his having behaved himself in a very comely and discreet manner. The Roundhead was, however, of a stubborn and still-necked race, as I have before hinted. He was far more inclined to believe his own eyes than any piece of paper in the world; and although he read the pass twice, he looked at Captain Barecolt as often, each time muttering between his teeth an expression of conviction that he was right after all.

"Well, it does not signify," he said aloud, at length; "you shall go to Hull. You may have stolen this pass, or forged it, for aught I know. Unless some one can swear that you are the same man here spoken of, back you shall troop."

"That I can swear," cried Digory Falgate, starting up, and forgetting his companion's injunctions to silence.

"And who, in the fiend's name, may you be?" demanded the Parliamentary soldier, growing hot; for Barecolt had by this time quietly freed his long sword from the sheath, and placed his back towards the corner, giving a glance, as he did so, to the window, across which two other figures, on a "back," passed at the moment.

"Who am I?" said Falgate; "a citizen of Hull, sir; and I am ready to swear that I saw that gentleman walking and talking with the governor yesterday, and that he is the same to whom that pass was given."

"Go to! go to!" said the Parliamentarian, scornfully; "you seem some mechanic, who can know naught of such matters. Meddle with what concerns you, good man. Landlord, call in two of my troopers."

"Be it at your peril and theirs," replied Barecolt, in a voice of extraordinary loudness, bringing the point of his weapon towards the chest of his opponent, who had taken a step forward. "Whoever says I am not Captain Jersval, lately employed by Sir John Hotham on the fortification of Hull, is a liar, and the consequence be upon his own head."

Just as he was pronouncing in a stentorian voice this recapitulation of the qualities and titles he thought fit to assume, and while Arrah Neil was drawing back to the farther side of the room with some alarm, but with the profound silence she had preserved throughout this scene, the landlord opened the door to obey the order he had received. But he was encountered at the threshold by two gentlemen, whom, to say truth, Captain Barecolt had seen a minute or two before crossing the window on horseback. Now our worthy friend, at his heart, did not well know whether to be sorry or rejoice at their presence, for there was much matter for very mingled feelings in their sudden appearance.

The first face that presented itself was that of Lord Beverley; and, with all Barecolt's bad qualities, he had a certain degree of chivalrous generosity in his nature which made him unwilling to have another engaged in the same awkward scrape as himself, especially when, as in the case of the earl, many important interests, he feared, might be perilled by his capture, while his own apprehension would principally affect his own neck. He had, therefore, shouted aloud, as soon as he saw his noble companion dismount to enter the inn, for the purpose of giving him some notice of what was going on within; nor had his words failed to catch the earl's ear, for the distance from the door of the room to the door of the house was but a step, and the windows were open.

If, however, the sight of the earl caused Captain Barecolt as much alarm as pleasure, the face of the personage who followed was anything but satisfactory in his eyes, for the last time he had seen it was in earnest, and, apparently, secret conference with Sir John Hotham, and our friend had no means whatsoever of knowing whether his evasion from Hull had become public before the earl and his companion had set out.

What was his surprise, however, when Lord Beverley advanced towards him, holding out his hand and exclaiming, "Ah, Captain Jersval, I was afraid I should have missed you, for we came by the cross-roads. But what is all this? Sword in hand, my gallant captain? What is all this, sir?" he continued, turning to the Parliamentary officer with an air of authority; "I hope you are not molesting this gentleman, who is a very grave and respectable person, and not one to draw his sword upon anybody without just occasion."

Barecolt was for once in his life wise enough not to say a word. He did not venture to hint at his feats in the Cevennes; he said nothing of Navarre or Arragon; he uttered not the name of Rochelle, but quietly left the earl to settle it all his own way. Falgate, too, was overpowered at the sudden recognition of Captain Barecolt as Captain Jersval, and the Roundhead officer looked foolish and confounded, muttering for a moment or two something about "a mistake," till he recovered himself sufficiently to return to his point and declare, "that if ever human eyes were to be trusted, the man calling himself Jersval was no other than one Captain Barecolt, a notorious malignant."

"And pray, sir, do you know me?" demanded the earl, "for you seem to be much more knowing than your neighbours."

"No, I never saw you before," replied the man, bluffly.

"But I know you, Master Stumpborough," said the earl's companion, advancing in turn. "At least, if I am not mistaken, you are the man I was told to look for, while accompanying this gentleman on his road. You are the cornet of Batten's troop of horse, are you not?"

"The same, sir," replied the other, with a stiff bow; "it seems we shall get at the truth of the matter now."

"It is only your stupid thick head that has prevented you getting at it before, Master Stumpborough," replied the gentleman. "This person, whom you persist in calling Barecolt—you must be a bare colt yourself for your pains—is Captain Jersval, who has been employed by Sir John Hotham in strengthening the defences of our town, and who is now going on with this gentleman upon business of importance. We have been looking for him all along the road; so, if you had stopped or injured him, you would have lost your ears for your pains."

"I told him so! I told him so! I told him so!" cried Barecolt, at every pause in the other's words.

But the gentleman from Hull proceeded, handing a small paper to the Parliamentarian. "There is a word or two for you from Sir John. Now get ready to march on without farther delay. I will return with you. I think, sir," he continued, addressing the earl, "you will not want me any more?"

"No, I thank you, sir," replied Lord Beverley, "I can find my way on with my companions."

nere. Commend me to Sir John, and accept my best thanks for your company so far."

While these few words were passing between the Royalist nobleman and his companion of the road, the Roundhead officer had been spelling through Sir John Hotham's noie, looking both puzzled with the writing and confounded with all that had lately taken place. When he had done, however, he thought fit to make an apology to Barecolt for taking him for the man he really was.

"I will never believe my eyes again, sir," he said, "for I would have sworn that you were that blaspheming, ribaldry varlet Barecolt, only dressed in a brown suit and with a steeple-crowned hat on. You are as like as two peas—only, now I think of it, he may be a little taller. But I hope you do not bear malice, sir: now I know who you are, I am satisfied; I only wished to do my duty."

"I certainly do not thank you, sir, for taking me, a peaceable and God-fearing man, for a blaspheming, ribaldry varlet," replied Barecolt, with a solemn air; "but I forgive you, sir—I forgive you—every man needs forgiveness, more or less, and so fare well; but use your eyes to better purpose another time; and if ever you see Captain Barecolt, tell him that, when next he and Jersval meet, I will set such a mark upon him that there shall be no more mistakes; and so fare you well."

A few words had in the mean while passed in a low tone between the earl and his companion from Hull, and the latter then took his leave, seeing the commander of the party of troopers and the landlord of the house out before him. Barecolt immediately turned a glance full of merriment to Lord Beverley; but that nobleman, with a grave face, put his finger to his lips, and then seating himself at the table, said, "Well, Captain Jersval, by your leave I will share your dinner, which, by the fullness of the plates, seems to have been somewhat unpropitiously interrupted."

"Certainly, certainly, sir," said Barecolt, resuming his seat at the head of the table. "Come, Falgate—come, Mistress Arrah Neil."

At the latter name the earl started, and gazed at Arrah for a moment, but took no farther notice, and only whispered to Barecolt, "Make haste!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

There was a jingling of arms and a shouting of words of command at the door of the inn, somewhat to much of the trumpet, and a great deal too much talking, for a veteran force; and then the word was given to march, followed by tramping of horses' feet in not the most orderly progression upon the road. The mouth of Captain Barecolt had been busy for the last five minutes upon beef and cabbage, and much execution had it done in that course of operations; but, no sooner had the sounds of the retiring party diminished, than it opened, evidently with the purpose of giving utterance to some of the pent-up loquacity which had long been struggling in his throat. But the Earl of Beverley made him a second significant sign to be silent, and his caution was not unnecessary, for at that moment mine host was standing at the back of the door, with a few silver pieces in his hand, grumbling

internally at the small pay of the Parliamentary party, and ready to overhear any thing that was said by his other guests. The next moment he opened the door of the room in which they were dining, and found them all eating and drinking in very edifying silence. His presence did not seem to discompose them in the least, and the only effect it had upon any one was to induce the earl to point to the huge black jack in the midst of the table, saying the few but gratifying words, "More ale!"

The landlord hastened to replenish the tankard; but, as there were no ingenious contrivances in those days for conjuring up various sorts of beer, at will, from the depths of a profound cellar, and as the house boasted no tapster, the host himself had to descend to the cellar to draw the liquor from the cask, and the earl took advantage of his absence to say to Barecolt and Falgate, "One more draught, my friends, if you will, and then to our horses' backs. Are you rested enough to travel on, fair lady, for I have business of much importance on hand?"

"Quite, sir," replied Arrah Neil; "I am only too glad to go on."

"I am rejoiced to see you here," continued the earl; "but we must not venture to speak more till we have nothing but the free air around us."

The next instant the landlord reappeared, and the earl, taking the black jack from his hands, put his lips to it, but passed it on after barely tasting the contents. Barecolt did it more justice, in a long, deep draught; and Falgate well-nigh drained it to the bottom. As soon as this ceremony was concluded, Barecolt and the rest of the party rose, and the earl returned thanks for the daily bread they had received, at less length, but with greater devotion, than his companion might have done.

"Now, Captain Jersval," he said, when this was done, "you see for the horses, while I pay the score." And when Barecolt returned, he found the face of his host bearing a much better satisfied look, after settling with his list guests, than it had assumed after the departure of him whom the good man mentally termed a beggarly cornet of horse.

The earl then placed Arrah Neil in the saddle, springing upon the back of a handsome, powerful charger, and, followed quickly by Barecolt and slowly by Falgate, took his way along the lane in which the house stood, choosing without hesitation many a turning and many a by-path, much to the admiration of the worthy captain, who had a natural fondness for intricate ways.

"You seem to know the road right well," he said, in a low tone, to the earl, when he could refrain no longer.

"I have known it from my boyhood," replied Lord Beverley; but he made no farther answer, and rode on in silence till the path they followed opened out upon one of the wide, open moors, not unfrequently met with even now in that part of the country, and which at that season was all purple with the beautiful flower of the heath.

"Now," cried the earl, "we can speak freely. You are full of wonder and curiosity, I know, captain; but first tell me," he continued, looking behind towards Digbury Falgate, who was labouring after them about three hundred yards in the rear, "whom have you got there?"

"Oh! a very honest fellow, my lord," replied Barecolt, "who must needs go join the king, and be a soldier."

"Put him into the infantry, then," said the earl. "But are you sure of him?"

"Quite," replied Barecolt; "he aided me last night to get speech with you in the block-house, and would not have cared if it had put his neck in a noose."

"Enough—enough," said the earl; "it had wellnigh been an unlucky business for all; but that matters not. The man showed his devotion, and therefore we may trust him; and now, fair lady, so long and so anxiously sought, I can scarcely believe my eyes to find you here upon the coast of Yorkshire. But, doubtless, you do not know me; let me say that I am an old friend of Lord Walton."

"Oh, yes, sir," replied Arrah Neil, "I remember you well. You were at Bishop's Merton that terrible night before the fire. You passed me as I sat by the well watching for Lord Walton's return, to tell him what they plotted against him; and you asked your way, and spoke kindly to me. Oh! I remember you well; but I wonder you remember me, for I am much changed."

"You are, indeed," replied the earl, "not only in dress, but in speech. I could hardly, at that time, wring a word from you, though I was anxious to know if I could give you aid or help."

"I was at that time in deep grief," replied Arrah Neil, "and that with me is always silent; but, besides, I had one of my cloudy fits upon me—those cloudy fits that are now gone forever."

"Indeed!" said the earl; "what has happened to dissipate them?"

"Memory," replied Arrah Neil. "At that time, all the past was covered with darkness, previous to the period at which I arrived at Bishop's Merton; but still, in the darkness, it seemed as if I saw figures moving about different from those that surrounded me, and as if I heard tongues speaking that never now sounded on my ear. And so longingly, so earnestly, used I to look upon that cloud over the past—so completely used it to withdraw my thoughts from the present—so anxiously used I to try to see those figures, and to hear those voices more distinctly, that I do not wonder people thought me mad. I thought myself so at times."

"But still," rejoined Lord Beverley, "how has all this been removed?"

"Because the cloud is gone," replied Arrah Neil, with a smile that made her fair face look angelic; "because I remember one scene, one house, one person, connected with the past, woke up memory as if she had been sleeping; and daily and hourly since she has been bringing up before me the pictures of other days, till all is growing clear and bright."

"I can understand all that," said the earl, with interest; "but I would fain hear how it happened, that memory had for so long failed you at a particular point."

"It is strange, indeed," said Arrah Neil, thoughtfully; "but I suppose it sometimes happens so, after such a terrible fever as that which I had at Hull, and of which my poor mother died."

"That explains the whole," replied the earl; "such is by no means an uncommon occurrence. Was this many years ago?"

"Oh, yes," replied Arrah Neil, "when I was very young. I could not be more than eleven or nine years old; for that good, kind woman, the landlady of the inn where we then lodged, told

me the other day that it was between nine and ten years ago. Those were sad times," she said.

"They were, indeed," said the Earl of Beverley, a deep shade coming over his brow; "as sad to you, it seems, as to me, for we both then lost those that were dearest to us."

He paused for a moment or two, looking down upon his horse's crest with a stern and thoughtful expression of countenance; and then raising his head, he shook his rein with a quick and impatient gesture, saying, "It is not good to think of such things. Come, Barecolt, now to satisfy your curiosity as far as is reasonable. I see that you have scarcely been able to keep it within bounds; but, first, let me thank you for your efforts to set me free; and, understand me, I am not one to limit my gratitude to words."

"But your lordship said it had wellnigh been an unlucky business for us all," exclaimed Captain Barecolt; "and, to say truth, as soon as the door was open, I saw that I had got into the wrong box, as it is called. There was somebody behind the curtain, I suspect; and I do not know," he continued, "whether it would be discreet to ask who it was."

"There need be no secret about it now," replied the earl. "It was no other than my worthy friend Sir John Hotham, the governor, who wished to hold some private communication with me. He feared, when you tried to open the door, that it was some one come to spy upon his actions; and, to tell the truth, I was very apprehensive lest your inopportune appearance should be the means not only of breaking off my conversation with him, but of getting you yourself hanged for a spy. I had no time for consideration, and therefore it was that I told you to get out of Hull as fast as possible, and wait for me on the road. I had still less time to think of what account I should give of you to Sir John; but the truth, when it can be told, my good captain, is always the best; and as the governor had already promised to set me at liberty speedily, I thought fit to tell him that you were an attached dependant of mine, who had foolishly thought fit to risk your own life to set me free. I told him, moreover, that I had directed you to get out of the town as soon as you could, and wait for me on the road, trusting to his promise for speedy liberation. He pronounced the plan a good one, and made arrangements for sending Colonel Warren with me, to ensure my passing safe if I should meet this party of horse with whom I just now found you embroiled."

"This Colonel Warren must be quick at taking a hint," replied Barecolt, "for he certainly entered into your lordship's schemes in my poor favour with great skill and decision."

"He is a very good man, and well suited," replied the earl; "the only one, indeed, in Hull on whom Sir John Hotham can rely. He was prepared, however; for, just before we set out this morning, as he told me afterward, first a rumour, and then a regular report from the gates, reached the governor, to the effect that you had run away from the town. Sir John replied coldly to the officer who brought him the intelligence, that you had not run away, but had been sent by him on business of importance; and that, for the future, when on guard at the gates, he had better mind his own business, which was to prevent the enemy from coming in, and not to meddle with those who went out. He then explained to Warren that we should find you on our way."

and in half an hour after, we came up the river in a boat, mounted the horses which had been sent to meet us a couple of miles from the town, and fell in with the party of horse, as you know."

"Truth is best, as you say," replied Barecolt; "but yet I do honour a man who can tell a sturdy lie with a calm and honest countenance when need compels him; and in this respect the worthy Colonel Warren certainly deserves high renown, for he vouched for my being Captain Jersval with as sincere and as innocent a face as a lamb's head at Easter."

"I fear he does not merit your praise," replied the earl, "and I do not think he would exactly covet it; but, at all events, he did not know you to be any other than Captain Jersval; for my conversation about you with Sir John Hotham was but short, and it did not occur to me to mention your real name."

"Lucky discretion," cried Barecolt; "but, in good sooth, my lord, we must wait a little for my good friend Diggorry Falgate, whose bones are already aching from his first acquaintance with a horse's back, and who cannot keep up with us at the pace we go."

"What hour is it?" said the earl. "We have not yet made much way, and I would fain be at Market Wighton, or at Pockington, before night. We have taken a great round to avoid some dangers on the Beverley road, otherwise the distance to York is not more than forty miles."

Having ascertained that it was not yet more than two o'clock, the earl agreed to pause a little for the benefit of good Diggorry Falgate, and about two miles farther on, stopped in a little village to feed the horses, in order to enable them to make as long a journey as possible before night.

The aspect of the landlord and landlady of the house at which they now paused was very different from that of their late host. The latter was a buxom dame of forty-five, with traces of beauty passed away, a coquetish air, a neat foot and instep, and a bodice, laced with what the Puritans would have considered very indecent red ribbands. Her husband was a jovial man, some ten years older than herself, with a face as round and rosy as the setting sun, a paunch beginning to become somewhat unwieldy, but with a stout pair of legs underneath it, which bore it up manfully. He wore his hat one side as he came out to greet his new guests, and a cock's feather therein, as if peculiarly to mark his abhorrence of Puritanical simplicity.

The first appearance of Lord Beverley and his party, the plainness of their dress, and the soberness of their air, did not seem much to conciliate his regard; but the nose of Captain Barecolt had something pleasant and propitious in his eyes, and the light ease with which the Earl of Beverley sprang to the ground and lifted Arrah Neil from the saddle, also found favour in his sight; for the worthy landlord had a very low estimation of all the qualities of all the Parliamentary party, and could not make up his mind to believe that any one belonging to it could sit a horse, wield a sword, or fire a shot with the same grace and dexterity as a Cavalier.

Just as the earl was leading in Arrah Neil, however, and Barecolt was following, Diggorry Falgate, to use a nautical term, hove in sight, and the landlord, who was giving orders to his ostler for the care of the horses, rubbed his eyes and gazed, and then rubbed his eyes again ex-

claiming, "By all the holy martyrs, I do believe that it is that jovial blade Falgate, who painted my sign, and kept us in a roar all the time it was doing."

"Ay, sir, that's just Diggorry," answered the ostler, "though I wonder to see him a horseback; for, if you remember, he once got upon our mare, and she shot him over her head in a minute."

"Ah, jolly Falgate!" cried the landlord, advancing towards him, "how goes it with you?"

"Hardly, hardly! good Master Stubbs," answered the painter. "This accursed beast has beat me like a stockfish, and I am sure that my knees, with holding on, are at this moment all black and blue, and green and yellow, like an unscrapped pullet."

"Faith, I am sorry to hear it," replied the landlord; "but you will come to it—you will come to it, Master Falgate. All things are beaten into us by an application on the same part, from our first schooling to our last. But tell me, do you know who these people are who have just come?"

"Tell you! To be sure," cried Diggorry Falgate; "I am of their party. One is a great lord."

"What! the long man with the nose," cried the worthy host. "'Tis a lordly nose, that I'll vouch for."

"No, no! not he," replied the painter; "he is a great fire-eating captain, the devil of a fighting soldier, who swallows you up a whole squadron in a minute, and eats up a battalion of infantry, pikes and all, like a boy devouring a salt hering, and never caring for the bones. No, no! 'tis the other is the lord."

"He's mighty plainly dressed for a lord," replied the host; "why, my jerkin's worth his and a shilling to boot."

"Ay, because we have just made our escape from Hull," replied the painter, "and we are all in disguise; but I can tell you, nevertheless, that he is a great lord, and very much trusted by the king."

"Then I'm the man for him," said the landlord; and, hurrying in, hat in hand, he addressed the Earl of Beverley, saying, "What's your lordship's pleasure? What can I get for you, my lord? Has your lordship any news from Nottingham or York? I am upon thorns till I hear from Nottingham, for I've got two sons—fine boys as ever you set your eyes upon—gone to join the king there, just a week ago last Monday, and my two best horses with them."

"In whose regiment are they?" asked the earl.

"Oh! in the noble Earl of Beverley's," replied the host; "he's our lord and master here, and, as soon as one of his people came down to raise men, my boys vowed they'd go."

"They shall be taken care of," said the earl, laying his hand upon the landlord's shoulder with a meaning smile, which let worthy Master Stubbs into the secret of his name in a moment; "and now, my good friend," he continued, "forget his lordship with me, and if you want really to serve me, send somebody to the top of the hill to bring me word if they see any parties moving about in the country. I have heard of such things, and would be upon my guard."

The landlord winked one small black eye till it was swallowed up in the rosy fat that surrounded it. Then, shutting the door of the room, he approached the earl, saying, in a mysterious tone, "You are quite right, you are quite right, my lord. There are such things in the country. One is to pass through the village this morn-

log, and there is another handful of them left over at the hamlet, beyond the edge, as we call the hill. There are not above a score of them, and if they were to come into the village, we would soon show them the way out, for we have surly fellows among us, and do not love Round-heads here. I will send over to watch them, sure enough; but if your lordship would like to make a sweep of them, we could mount half a dozen men in the village, who would break some heads with right good will, and in two or three hours we could have help over from the Lady Margaret Langley's, for one of her people was here yesterday, and told me that they expected a party of Cavaliers there either that day or to-day."

Lord Beverley paused and meditated for a moment, but he then replied, "No, my good friend, no! The business I am on is too important to run any risks before it is accomplished; and, in the next place, it would not be right to bring down the vengeance of these people upon good Lady Margaret. It is about nine miles to her house, I think, too, so that would cause delay. Send some one to watch the gentry from the hill. Have the horses fed with all despatch, and give us a flagon of wine, for we have two thirsty men in our company."

"You shall have of the best in the land, my lord," replied the jolly host. "Only to think of my not knowing you!"

The wine was soon brought, and Barecolt, who had been delivering himself of a few marvels in the kitchen, followed it quickly, and shared in the draught. The horses, accustomed to hard work, were not without appetite for their provender, so that their meal was speedily despatched. But when the earl and his companions once more issued forth to pursue their way, he was surprised to find four stout men mounted and armed by the care of the good landlord, to escort him on his journey. He might, perhaps, have preferred a less numerous party, in the hope of passing unobserved; but while he was discussing the matter with the host, a boy, who had been sent up to watch, ran back into the village, bringing the news that the men were moving from Little Clive, along the highroad towards the top of the hill.

"Well, then, I will take the road to the right, towards Beverley," said the earl. "Mount! mount! and let us away with all speed. Among the trees they will hardly see us, if we can get a mile on the way. Come, Master Falgate, we must have no lagging behind, or, by Heaven! you will fall into their hands."

"I would rather be bumped to death," replied Falgate, clambering up into his saddle; "and that wine has healed some of my bruises."

"We'll make a good fight of it, if they do catch us," said one of the mounted men. "There is not above a score of them."

"Come on, then, come on quick," cried the earl; and, setting spurs to his horse, he rode out of the village, with fair Arrah Neil placed between himself and Barecolt, and Falgate, with their escort, bringing up the rear.

They had reached the wooded lane which led along under the slope towards Beverley before the party of horse which had been seen by the boy appeared upon the top of the hill; but a break of some two or three hundred yards in length in the hedgerow occurred at the distance of about a mile, and by the movements that the earl remarked among the troopers, whom he

now saw distinctly, he judged that his little party was also remarked.

"Spur on, my lord," cried Barecolt, who had also turned round to look; "they are coming after us, but we have got a fair start. Spur on, Falgate, or you will be caught;" and, putting their horses to their utmost speed, they rode along the lane, while the faint blast of a trumpet was borne by the wind from above, and the small body of cavalry was seen to take its way over the open fields, as if to cut them off.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LEAVING the fugitives in that period of their flight with which the last chapter closes, I must, with the benevolent reader's good leave, return to personages whom I have left somewhat too long, and for whom I own a deep interest.

Annie Walton, sweet Annie Walton, stood, as the reader may recollect, conversing with her worthy aunt, Lady Margaret Langley, and had just announced that among the voices she heard below was one, the tones of which recalled a person who ought to have been over the sea long before. Now it may be supposed, and, considering all things, not unnaturally, that she alluded thus vaguely to the Earl of Beverley. Such, however, was not the case; for the voice of Lord Beverley was rich and musical, while the sounds she heard were far from particularly harmonious; and an oath or two, pronounced in a somewhat loud tone, and intermixed with laughter, were certainly not of the vocabulary which he was most accustomed to employ.

At the same time, the stag-hound who followed them along the passages pricked up his ears with a sharp growl, and took two or three quick steps in advance, as if to spring forward on the first occasion. Lady Margaret chid him back, however. "Who is it, child?" she asked. "Who do you fancy it is? I expect no one."

"I think the voice is that of a certain Captain Barecolt," replied Miss Walton; "not a very pleasing personage, dear aunt, but one who once did us very good service—a brave man and a good soldier, my brother says, but sadly given to gasconade."

"If he be a brave man and a good soldier, a loyal subject, and have done you and Charles good service, he shall be right welcome, Annie," replied the old lady, "and he may gasconade to the moon, if he pleases. Down, sir, down! Will you show your white teeth when I forbid you? But what can they be about, Annie? never did I hear such a bustle. Hark! there is Charles's voice as loud as the other. Come quick, let us see."

"Quick, out with the horses!" cried the voice of Lord Walton, below. "See them out like lightning. Lie there, Francis, for a moment. Call my aunt—call my sister. By Heaven, they shall rue it! Which way did they seem to take?"

"They halted before the house," said a faint voice, which made Miss Walton's cheek turn pale; "flushed with their success, they may dare to attack it. Captain, I owe you my life."

"Nothing, nothing, my lord," rejoined the voice of Barecolt. "But we must be quick. Lord Walton, or their courage may be lost."

they may run away, taking her with them. Can I get any better arms, for we had nothing but our swords—'twas that which ruined us."

"There are plenty in the hall," cried Lady Margaret Langley, who was now entering the room in which she had left her nephew. At the same moment, one of Lord Walton's servants appeared at the other door, saying,

"The horses are ready, my lord. The people seem going up the lane."

The scene the room presented was very different from that which it had displayed when Annie Walton and Lady Margaret left it. Lying on some cushions, which had been cast down upon the ground, was the graceful form of the Earl of Beverley, evidently wounded, and somewhat faint. By his side stood Lord Walton, holding a light in his hand, and gazing down upon his friend's countenance, while two stout countrymen, one with a drawn sword in his hand, appeared a little behind, and the tall figure of Captain Barecote was seen through the open door in the vestibule beyond, reaching down some arms from the wall.

"Dear Annie, dear aunt, look to the earl," cried Charles Walton. "He is shot through the leg—I cannot stop to tell you more—I must pursue them—Hal see, he is bleeding terribly: 'tis that which makes him faint."

"Go, Charles, go!" exclaimed the earl. "I shall do well enough. The wound is nothing; 'tis but the loss of blood. Quick, quick, away! or you will not catch them."

Lord Walton gave one more look to his friend, and a sign to his sister to attend to the earl immediately, and then quitted the room. The sound of prancing hoofs and jingling arms was then heard without, and then the creaking of the drawbridge as it was lowered, and then the fierce galloping of horse along the lane. Lady Margaret and Miss Walton knelt by the wounded man's side, and asked him regarding his wound; but the voice of Annie was faint and low, and her hand trembled, so that she could hardly hold the light while her aunt endeavoured to stanch the blood. More effectual assistance, however, was rendered by the servant William, who ran in the moment he had secured the bridge, and with his aid the wound was soon discovered pouring forth a torrent of blood from some large vessel cut by the ball, which had passed quite through the leg a few inches below the knee. Lady Margaret, however, had some skill in leech-craft, and William was by no means an inexperienced assistant. Bandages were speedily procured, and with little trouble and no loss of time, the wound was bound up and the bleeding stopped.

But few words were spoken while this took place, for good Lady Margaret, feeling herself in a position of authority, imposed silence upon all around her. She was too much occupied herself, also, in her surgical operations, to remark the pale countenance and anxious eyes of her niece, or the smile of confidence and encouragement with which the earl strove to quiet her apprehensions.

Just as the old lady had done, however, through the doors of the vestibule and hall, which had been left open, was heard the sharp report of pistol shots, and a confused murmur as of distant tumult. Lady Margaret started and looked round, murmuring, "Ay, strife, strife. This is the world thereof."

Miss Walton pressed her hand upon her heart,

but said nothing; and the earl, giving a glance to the servant William, exclaimed,

"For God's sake run out and see. Have the drawbridge ready, too. If we could have got in at once, the worst part of the mischief would have been spared."

"I must go, indeed I must," said Annie Walton. "Oh, poor Charles, heaven protect him!" and, running out of the room, she crossed the stone court, and bending over the low wall at the farther angle, gazed down the road in the direction from which the sounds had appeared to come. Night had now set in, but yet the darkness was not very profound, and Miss Walton fancied that she beheld several moving figures at some distance up the long, straight avenue.

The next moment there was a flash, followed by a sharp report, then another, and another; and on each occasion, the sudden light showed her for an instant a number of men and horses, all grouped together in wild and confused strife. The instant after, a horseman came down the road at headlong speed, and Annie Walt exclaimed,

"Oh! the drawbridge, William—let down the drawbridge."

"Wait a minute, my lady," replied the servant; "it is not every man that gallops who is coming here."

He calculated more accurately in his coolness than the lady had done in her apprehensions, for the fugitive passed by without drawing a rein, and William turned round to give her comfort, saying,

"That's a sign my young lord has won the day—or, rather, the night I should call it. Hark! there are some more coming. It is he this time, for their pace is quieter."

Annie Walton approached nearer to the bridge, murmuring a prayer to God for her brother's safety, and straining her eyes upon the advancing body of horsemen, who came on at an easy trot down the road. At their head was a figure which she felt sure was that of her brother, but yet she could not be satisfied till she exclaimed,

"Charles, is that you? Are you safe?"

"Yes, yes, all safe," replied the voice of Lord Walton: "some of us a little hurt, but not seriously, I hope. We have made them pay dearly for their daring. Run in, Annie, run in, and I will join you in a minute."

While William and old Dixon unhooked the chains of the drawbridge from the posts and let it slowly down, Miss Walton returned to the room where she had left her aunt and the Earl of Beverley, exclaiming, with a heart relieved,

"He is safe—he is safe!"

Lord Beverley took her hand as she approached his side, gazing earnestly in her face and saying,

"Thank God!"

Annie Walton felt his look and his words almost as a reproach for having forgotten him in her anxiety for her brother, though, in truth, such was far from the earl's meaning, his only thought at that moment being, what might have been the fate of that sweet girl, had she lost both her brother and her lover in one night.

"And how are you, Francis?" said Annie Walton, wishing, with all the frankness of her heart, to make up for her absence by giving him the name she knew he would love the best upon her lips. "Forgive me for leaving you, but oh! I was terrified for Charles."

Before the earl could reply, there was the sound of many persons' feet in the hall and the

vestibule, and the voice of Lord Walton was heard giving various orders, and making inquiries concerning the wounds which his followers might have received. It seemed that they were but slight, or, at all events, that the men made light of them, for they all protested that there was no harm done, and the only one who seemed to complain was the gallant Captain Barecolt, who replied to the young nobleman's inquiries,

"It is the most unfortunate thing in the world, my lord. I had rather the fellow had run me through the body."

"But it is not serious, surely, captain," said Lord Walton. "Let me see."

"Serious! my lord; it is ruin," replied Captain Barecolt. "It is right across my nose. I am marked for life, so that I shall never be able to conceal myself, or pass for Captain Jersval any more."

Lord Walton laughed, replying,

"You will do so better than ever, captain, for you are so well known without the mark, that no one will know you with it."

"That is true too," replied Captain Barecolt; and the next moment Lord Walton, advancing through the vestibule, pushed open the door, which his sister had left ajar, and entered Lady Margaret's sitting-room.

He was not alone, however, for by the hand he led poor Arrah Neil, somewhat pale, and with her hair dishevelled, but perhaps only looking the more exquisitely beautiful, as the large chestnut curls fell wildly round her fair brow, and over her soft, rounded cheek.

With a cry of joy and surprise, Annie Walton sprang forward and took the poor girl in her arms, exclaiming,

"Ah! dear Arrah, this is a glad sight, indeed!"

But the effect of this sudden apparition upon Lady Margaret Langley was even greater than upon her niece. She gazed upon Arrah Neil with a look expressive of more than wonder; and then hurrying forward, she took her by the hand, fixing her eyes upon her countenance, and asking, in a tremulous voice,

"Who is that?"

"It is Arrah Neil, a much-valued friend of ours," replied Annie Walton, unwilling to enter into any explanation of the poor girl's history and circumstances in her presence.

"Arrah Neil," repeated Lady Margaret, in a thoughtful and even melancholy tone; and then, waving her head sadly to and fro, she let go Arrah's hand, retreated to the other side of the room, and casting herself into her usual chair, fell into a deep fit of thought. At the same time Lord Walton led Arrah to a seat, and bending down, spoke a few words to her in a low voice, to tranquillize her, and make her feel at ease. But while he was still speaking, the large stag-hound rose up from the side of Lady Margaret's chair, walked slowly across the room, and laid his huge muzzle on Arrah's knee. She showed no fear, and, indeed, took little heed, only gently patting the dog's head as he fixed his keen, bright eyes on her face. The next moment, however, he raised himself a little and licked her hand, and Lady Margaret Langley, moved by emotions which she explained to no one, pressed her handkerchief upon her eyes and burst into tears.

Neither Lord Walton nor his sister judged it right to take any notice of the good old lady's agitation; but, while Miss Walton stood beside

poor Arrah Neil and conversed with her quietly, making her own remarks, meanwhile, upon the great change which had taken place in her manners and appearance, the young nobleman crossed the room to the side of his wounded friend, and inquired how he felt himself.

"Oh! better, better," replied the earl. "It was but loss of blood, Charles: the shot that passed through my leg and killed my charger, must have cut some large blood-vessel, and I, not knowing it, went on fighting on foot by the side of that poor young lady whose horse—"

"I know, I know," said Lord Walton. "It fell with her. She told me; but what happened then?"

"Why, after a time," replied the earl, "a sort of giddiness came over me, and I fell. The scoundrel Batten had just got his sword to my throat, when that gallant fellow Barecolt, after having despatched another, sprang to the ground beside me, and threw the Roundhead back. Two of them were then upon him at once; but, on my honour, we have done him injustice in thinking all his strange stories mere rhodomontade, for hand to hand with them he kept up the fight, giving them blow for blow on either side, with a skill in the use of his arms such as I have seldom seen, till at length I got upon my feet again, and, though staggering like a drunken man, contrived to call one of them off, while he put an end to Batten, sending his sword through and through him, cuirass and all. We then got the lady on horseback, for the other man turned for a moment and ran; and, catching Batten's horse, I mounted, and we began our retreat hither. The fellows who had been driven off, however, rallied, and charged us just as we got to the gates, for the bridge was up, and we could not pass; but Barecolt plunged through the stream, clambered over the wall, and unhooked the chains. We were all by this time in confusion and disarray; I so faint that I could scarcely strike a blow, and the rest scattered about, fighting as they could. We made a stand, however, at the bridge till I thought all had entered, and then raised it. When in the court, however, I found that the poor girl was left behind. That discovery, and the loss of blood together, I believe, made me fall as I was dismounting, and they carried me in hither, where I have lain, as you know, ever since. But, hark you! Charles, ask your good aunt if she have not some cordial, as these good ladies sometimes have, which will bring back my strength speedily, for, on my life, I must go forward to-morrow morning early."

"Impossible, Francis," replied Lord Walton; "quite impossible. At the best, you cannot travel for a week or more."

"Good faith, but I must," replied the earl. "I have tidings for the king of the utmost importance."

"Then you must trust them to me to carry," replied Lord Walton, "for the journey to York would cost you your life. If it be absolutely necessary for you to see the king yourself, I will send a litter for you and an escort from York; but if the tidings be immediate, you had better trust them to me."

"It is but weakness, it is but weakness," said the earl. "To-morrow I shall be better. Ask your aunt, Charles, if she have not some of those strength-giving balms that poets and doctors talk of. But what has affected her thus? She has been weeping."

"Indeed I know not," answered Lord Walton. "I will go and speak to her;" and, moving quietly across the room, he seated himself by the side of Lady Margaret, who by this time had taken the handkerchief from her eyes, and was gazing sadly and steadfastly upon the floor.

"What is the matter, my dear aunt?" he said, in a low tone. "What has affected you thus?"

"A dream, Charles," replied the old lady; "a dream of the past. But it is gone. I will give way to such visions no more;" and, rising from her chair, she advanced directly towards Arrah Neil, and again taking her hand, she kissed her tenderly, saying, "You are so like one that is gone, and who was very dear, that I was overcome, sweet child. But I shall love you well, and you must love me too."

"Oh! that I will," replied Arrah Neil; "I always love those that are good to me; and, because they have been few, I love them the better."

"Right! right!" exclaimed Lady Margaret. "Love few, and love well! But now to other things. Charles, this noble friend of yours must be carried to bed, there to lie till we are sure the wound will not burst forth again."

"Why, my dear aunt," replied Lord Walton, "his rash lordship tells me he would fain go on to York to-morrow."

"Madness!" answered Lady Margaret; "but all his family were mad before him," she added, in a lower voice. "His father thought to win honour and gratitude by doing good; his mother died of grief. Madness, you see, on both parts! He has told me who he is, so I wonder not at any insanity. Now I will answer for it, he thinks it a duty to go on; but I will tell him it cannot be. My lord the earl, you are a prisoner here till farther orders. It is vain to think to move me. For your dear mother's memory's sake, I will be your jailer, let the business that calls you hence be what it will. So now to bed, my lord; you shall have that which will restore your strength as quickly as may safely be; but we must have no fever, if we can help it; and I will tell you plainly, that were you to attempt to reach York to-morrow, you would go no farther. I will have the people in to carry you to the room prepared for Charles; it is close at hand. He must shift with another."

"Nay, nay," said the earl, "I can walk quite well, dear lady. I am better now—I am stronger. Charles will lend me his arm."

"Take care, then," cried Lady Margaret, "and do not bend your knee, or we shall have it gushing forth again. Here, tall man, whoever you are," she continued, turning to Captain Barecoll, who entered the room at the moment, "put your hand under the earl's arm, while my nephew aids him on the other side. There—that will do; now gently. I will go before. Call some of the people, Annie."

Thus aided and escorted, the Earl of Beverley moved easily to the room which had been prepared for Lord Walton on the same floor, while Miss Walton followed anxiously, and paused for a moment while her aunt examined the bandages round his knee. Her lover marked the look of painful expectation with which she gazed; and perhaps no balm in all Lady Margaret's stores could have tended so much to restore health and strength, as the deep interest that shone in her eyes.

"Do not be alarmed," he said, holding out his hand to her; "this is a mere nothing; and they

are all making more of it than it deserves. Go and comfort your fair companion, for she needs it much—but I shall see you to-morrow, shall I not, Annie?"

The last word was uttered in a low tone, as if he almost feared to speak it; but there are moments when a woman's heart grows bold, as they are especially when it is necessary to cheer and to console.

"Oh! certainly, Francis," replied Miss Walton. "I will see you beyond doubt; my aunt and I will be your nurses. For the present, then, farewell. I will go and comfort poor Arrah, as you say."

When Annie Walton returned to the room where she had left Arrah Neil, she found her still seated, but with the great staghead, now with one paw upon her knee, looking up in her face as if he would fain have held some conversation with her, had he but possessed the gift of speech. Arrah, too, was bending down and talking to him; smoothing his rough head with her hand, and seeming as much delighted with his notice as he appeared to be with her. As soon as Miss Walton entered, however, she turned from her shaggy companion to her friend, and, advancing towards her, threw herself into her arms. For a moment she remained silent, with her eyes hid on the lady's shoulder, and when she raised them they were wet with bright drops; but Annie Walton remarked, though without one spark of pride, that there was a great difference in the manner of Arrah Neil towards her. There was a something gone—something more than the mere look of deep, absent thought, which used so frequently to shade her countenance. There had been a reserve—a timidity in answering or addressing her, more than mere humility, which was no longer there. Often had she striven to reassure the poor girl, and to teach her to look upon the family at Bishop's Merton rather as friends than mere protectors; but, though Arrah Neil had ever been frank and true in her words, there seemed always a limit drawn in her manner which she never passed, except, perhaps, at times, when she was peculiarly earnest towards the young lord himself. It had seemed as if she felt even painfully that she was a dependant, and resisted every thing that might make her forget it for a moment.

Now, however, that restraint was gone; she gazed upon Annie Walton with a look of deep love; she kissed her as she would have kissed a sister; she poured forth her joy at seeing her again in words full of feeling—ay, and of poetry; and the lady was glad that she did so. She would not have said one syllable to check such familiarity for the world, for the character and fate of Arrah Neil had been to her a matter of deep thought and deep interest. She felt indeed, also, that, after all that had passed—after the scenes they had shared in, and the anxieties and fears they had felt for each other, Arrah Neil could never be to her what she had formerly been; that there was something more in her bosom than pity and tenderness towards the poor girl; that there was affection, tenderness, companionship: not the mere companionship of hours and of dwelling-places, but the companionship of thoughts and of interests, which is, perhaps, the strongest and most enduring of all human ties. There was more, even, than all this. The change in Arrah Neil went beyond manner only; the tone of her mind and of her

language had undergone the same; it seemed elevated, brightened, enlarged. She had always been graceful, though wild and strange. There had been the flashes of a glowing fancy, breaking forth, though oppressed and checked, like the flickering bursts of flame that rise fitfully up from a half-smothered fire; but now the mind shone out clear and unclouded, giving dignity and ease to every expression and every act, however plain the words or ordinary the movements; and Annie Walton felt that from that hour poor Arrah Neil must be to her as a friend.

"Come, dear Arrah," she said, "sit down beside me, and let us talk calmly. You are now among friends again—friends from whom you must never part more; and yet we will not speak now over any thing that can agitate you. Lord Beverley tells me you have had much to suffer; and, I am sure, all the scenes you have gone through this day, and the fatigues you have endured, must have wellnigh worn you out and overpowered you."

"I am weary," she replied, wiping away some drops that still trembled on her eyelids, "but I have not suffered as you would do, were you to pass through the same. It is my fate to encounter terrible things—to pass through scenes of danger and difficulty. Such has been my course from childhood; such, perhaps, may it be to the end of life. I am prepared and ready—nay, more, accustomed to it; and when any new disaster falls upon me, I shall henceforth only look up to heaven and say, Oh God! thy will be done. I am not a garden-plant, as you are, Annie. I am a shrub of the wilderness, and prepared to bear the wind and storm."

"Heaven forbid you should meet with many more, Arrah," answered Miss Walton; "there are turns in every one's fate, and, I trust, for you there are bright days coming."

"Still with an even mind will I try to bear them, be they fair or foul," said Arrah Neil, "more calmly now than before; for much has happened to me that I will tell you soon; and I have found that those things which gave me most anguish have brought me happiness that I never dreamed of finding, and that there is a smile for every tear, Annie, a reward for every endurance."

"You have learned the best philosophy since we parted, dear girl," replied Miss Walton, "and, in truth, you are much changed."

"No, no!" cried Arrah Neil, eagerly, "I am not changed; I am the same ever—just the same. Have you not seen a little brown bud upon a tree in the spring time, looking as if there were nothing in its heart but dry leaves, and then the sun shine upon it for an hour, and out it bursts all green and fresh? But still it is the same bud you looked at in the morning. As for my philosophy, if such be the name you give it, I have learned that in the course of this day. As I rode along, now hither, now thither, in our flight from Hull, I thought of all that has passed within the last two or three months: I thought of how I had grieved, and how I had wept, when they dragged me away from you and your kind brother; and, at the same time, I remembered what all that pain had purchased for me, and I asked myself if it might not be always so here, even on the earth?—Ay, and more, Annie: if the grief and anguish of this world might not have its compensation hereafter? So, when I found myself surrounded by the troopers without, and saw that good lord borne in here wounded, and

the bridge raised behind him, I said, now is the trial, Oh God, thy will be done."

Annie Walton gazed upon her with surprise, increasing every moment; but she would not suffer the effect produced upon her mind to be seen, lest she should alarm and check the fair being beside her; fearing, too, that at any moment one of those fits of deep, sad abstraction of mind should come upon her, which she could not believe to have wholly passed away.

She merely replied, then, "You say, dear Arrah, that the pain you felt in parting with us has purchased you some great happiness: may I ask you what it is? from no idle curiosity, believe me, but merely because, as I have often shared and felt for your sorrows, Arrah, I would fain share and sympathize with your joy."

"I will tell you—I will tell you all," replied Arrah Neil, laying her hand upon Miss Walton's; "I must tell you, indeed, very soon, for I could not keep it in my own bosom, lest my heart should break with it. But I would fain tell him first—I mean your brother, who has been so kind and noble, so good and generous towards a poor girl like me, whom he knew not."

But, before she could conclude the sentence, Captain Barecote returned from the chamber of the Earl of Beverley, and a conversation interesting to both was brought, for the time, to an abrupt conclusion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE beauty of the illustrious Captain Barecote was rather heightened in its kind than diminished by a large strip of black plaster which he had drawn across the bridge of his egregious nose, for he was one of those provident men who never go without a certain store of needful articles in their pockets, and his professional habits had taught him exactly what sort of small commodities was most frequently required. Thus there were few occasions on which that personage would have been found unprovided with a piece of strong cord, a sharp pocket-knife, a lump of wax, a corkscrew, a hand's-breadth of good sticking plaster, and a crown piece. I do not say more than one, for but too frequently the piece of silver was a mere unity; and, indeed, he seemed to have a pleasure in reducing it to solitude; for no sooner had it any companions, than he took the most expeditious means of removing them. At the last crown, however, he always paused; and it seldom happened, what between good luck and occasional strong powers of abstinence, that sheer necessity compelled him to spend that piece before he had recruited his stock.

He now advanced towards Arrah Neil and Miss Walton with all the consciousness of great exploits about him, and after a long inquiry regarding their health, began a recapitulation of all his deeds that day, notwithstanding the presence of an eyewitness, by which it would have appeared that he had killed at least seven of the enemy with his own hand; regretting, indeed, in a deprecatory tone, that he had not killed more, but attributing this short coming, in comparison with his usual achievements, to the care he had been obliged to take of the earl after he was wounded; otherwise, he hinted, he might have destroyed the whole force. He was still in full career, when Lord Walton and Lady Margaret reappeared.

and whether it was to be attributed to the fact of his having delivered himself of a sufficient quantity of long-pent-up hyperbole, or whether it was that he knew that the young lord was not likely to give entire credit to his military statements, certain it is that his tone became moderated as soon as that gentleman appeared.

Captain Barecolt, however, was obliged to answer several questions; for, while the lady of the house went to give orders for the accommodation of the numerous unexpected visitors by whom her house was thronged, Lord Walton proceeded to inquire how all the events of the day had come about, and especially how it had happened that a party of five or six persons, quietly crossing the country, were charged by a body of the Parliamentary horse.

"This is worse than civil war," he exclaimed; "and if such a state of things is to be established, we shall have nothing but anarchy from one end of the country to the other. Had you been an armed party, bearing the royal colours, with drum or trumpet, it might have been excusable, considering these lamentable dissensions; but to attack you thus, without cause and without warrant, was the act of a mere marauder. This Captain Batten, whom you have killed, I find, has met with too honourable a fate. He deserved to die by the hands of the hangman, and not by those of a gentleman."

"Yes, my lord," replied Barecolt, with an air of calm grandeur, "I put him to death among others, and we had no time to consider what sort of fate was meet for them. However, I must do the men justice, and say that I suspect they did not act without a motive, or, perhaps, without many. In the first place, I believe that I was the unhappy object of their enmity. I had been recognised at the first inn where we stopped by the cornet of this Captain Batten's troop; and though we were speedily joined by the noble earl and a certain Colonel Warren, the latter of whom vowed manfully that I was not the Captain Barecolt of whose little exploits they had heard so much, but one Captain Jersval, an officer employed by Sir John Hotham on the fortifications of Hull—I never heard a man lie so neatly in my life, and he deserves great credit for the same—although, I say, this Colonel Warren delivered me from the first danger, and carried Cornet Stumphorough back with him to Hull, yet I saw clearly that the worthy Roundhead was not convinced, and afterward, as we were riding along, I caught a glimpse of a man very like a trumpeter, going at full speed on our left."

"But what would that imply?" demanded Lord Walton.

"Simply that Cornet Stumphorough had sent off a messenger to tell his commander, Captain Batten, who knew me well, from having seen me with your lordship on the march from Bishop's Merton, that he would catch me on the road if he looked out sharply. In this opinion I am confirmed, from having heard in the kitchen of an inn, where we stopped to feed the horses, that this same trumpeter had been seen half an hour before galloping round on the outside of the village, and taking his way in the direction of Captain Batten's party. This might be one plea for attacking us; and another might be, that we were certainly riding as fast as we could go. Now every beast, my lord, has an inclination to run after another beast which it sees run away. Then, again, when they had nearly come up with us, they commanded us to halt, an order

which we disobeyed to the best of our ability. The natural consequence was, they charged us immediately, and brought us fighting along the road for half a mile. Nevertheless, I am very much afraid that your lordship's humble servant was the great object of the attack."

"However that might be," replied Lord Walton, "my friend, the Earl of Beverley, has informed me of the gallant service you rendered on this occasion; and you may depend upon it, Captain Barecolt, that his majesty shall have a full report thereof."

"A trifle, my lord, a mere trifle," replied the worthy captain, with an indifferent air; "these are things that happen every day, and are hardly worthy of notice. If I have an opportunity afforded to me, indeed, of performing the same deeds that I achieved at Rochelle and in the Cevennes, then there will be something to talk of. The only thing, at present, for which I shall claim any credit," he continued, turning towards Arrah Neil, "is for the skill and dexterity which I displayed in setting free this young lady, and enabling her to acquire certain information regarding her birth, parentage, and education, as the broad sheet has it, which may be of vast importance to her."

"Indeed, sir, you have been most kind, zealous, and resolute in my behalf," replied Arrah Neil; "and though, perhaps, I may never have the means of showing you how grateful I am except in words, yet I shall be ever grateful, and there is One who rewards good deeds, even when those for whom they are done have no power to offer a recompense."

"Whatever he has done for you, my poor Arrah," said Lord Walton, "shall not go without reward, if I can give it. But what is this Captain Barecolt says about your birth and parentage? He rouses my curiosity."

"I will tell you all, my lord, when I can tell you alone," replied Arrah. "I mean, all that I have heard, for I have no proof of the facts."

"But I have some proof," said Captain Barecolt, "for I have a copy of the paper I found among that old knave's goods—one Mr. Dry, of Longsoken, whom your lordship may remember. He did not carry off Mistress Arrah without a motive, and the paper shows clearly that she is not what she seems to be; that she is of high race, and, if I judge right, of large property."

Lord Walton paused and mused; but his sister threw her arm round Arrah Neil, exclaiming, "Oh, dear child, I do rejoice at this indeed."

"And so do I," said Arrah Neil, with a sigh; "but as I was enjoined strictly not to mention any of the facts but to you, Annie, or to your brother—the person who told me said on many accounts—I hope Captain Barecolt, who has been so kind in all this business, will not mention what he believes to be the truth, till he have his lordship's leave to do so."

Captain Barecolt laid his hand upon his heart and made her a low bow; but Lord Walton shook his head with a half-reproachful smile, saying, "When you were a poor unfriended girl, Arrah, you used to call me Charles Walton, and now you are to become a great lady, it seems, you give me no other name but my lord."

The blood spread warm over Arrah Neil's fair cheek and brow. "Oh, no, no," she cried, "I know not why I did it; but I will call you so no more. You will be always Charles Walton to me—the noble, the good, and the true, who has

led me as a child, and protected me in my youth, did not despise me in my poverty, and cheered and consoled me in my distress."

Her face was all glowing, her eyes were full of tears, when Lady Margaret returned; but for a moment or two Lord Walton did not speak. The look, the manner, of Arrah Neil produced emotions in his bosom that he did not rightly understand, or, rather, roused into actively feelings that he did not know were there. On Lady Margaret Langley, too, the poor girl's appearance at that moment seemed to produce a strange effect. She stopped suddenly as she was crossing the room, gazed intently upon her, and then, as the stag-hound rose and walked slowly up to her, she stooped and patted his head, saying, "Ah, Busto, we might well be both mistaken. Come," she continued, turning to her nephew, "supper is ready in the hall; and in the good old fashion of other days, we will all take our meal together, and then to rest. For you, my sweet child, whose name I do not yet know—"

"They call me Arrah Neil," replied the girl, to whom she addressed herself.

"Well, then, Arrah, I have ordered a chamber for you near my own."

"Nay," said Annie Walton, "Arrah shall share mine, my dear aunt; it is not the first time she has done so."

"That is better, perhaps," answered Lady Margaret; "you will doubtless have much to speak of; but I must have my share of her, Annie; for when I look at those eyes, it seems as if twenty sad years were blotted out, and I were in bright days again. But come, the people are waiting us in the hall with furious appetites, if I may judge from what I saw of them as I passed through."

Thus saying, she led the way; and in a few moments they were all seated at a long table, the followers of Lord Walton and the men who had accompanied the Earl of Beverley being ranged on either side below the more dignified part of the company.

It was altogether a somewhat curious and interesting scene as they supped in the old oak-lined hall, with the light flashing upon twelve suits of armour placed between the panels, and showing, seated round, a body of men, scarcely one of whom was without some wound recently received. One had his hand bound up in a napkin, another his arm in a sling, a third had his coat thrown back from his shoulder, having received a pistol-shot in the fleshy part of the breast, another had a deep gash upon his cheek, not very neatly plastered up by the hands of some of Lady Margaret's servants, while Captain Barecolt appeared at the head of the file with his large black patch across his nose.

Not much conversation took place during the first part of the meal, for Lord Walton was grave and thoughtful; and every one at his end of the table, except, indeed, Captain Barecolt, was too much occupied with busy memories of the past or deep interest in the present to be very loquacious.

The persons at the lower part of the board were restrained by respect for those above them from talking in aught but whispers; and Captain Barecolt himself, with that provident disposition which may have been remarked in him, always thought it best to secure his full share of the good things of this life while they were going, and to keep his eloquence in reserve for a season of leisure.

The lady of the house, with her two fair guests, rose as soon as the actual meal was over, and quitted the hall; and all the inferior persons also retired, with the exception, indeed, of Captain Barecolt, if he can be included in that class. He, however, though Lord Walton had also risen, remained seated, eyeing a half-empty tankard which stood at his right hand, with as evident dislike to abandon its society while any thing remained within its shining sides. Knowing well the habits of this peculiar species of cavalier, Lord Walton pointed to the tankard, saying, "Go on, captain, you will soon finish it, and then I must see the earl and go to rest, for I depart early to-morrow. But in the mean while I would fain hear more particularly how you met with our fair Mistress Arrah, and, indeed, how you and Lord Beverley happen to be here at all, for I cannot imagine that you can have fulfilled the mission with which you were charged."

"Faith, my lord," replied the worthy captain, after a deep draught, "our mission was cut wondrous short, as your lordship shall bear; and he proceeded to give his noble companion a full account of all that had occurred, from Lord Beverley's departure from the court till they found themselves prisoners at Hull.

Lord Walton listened, without making the slightest comment, to the tale with which the reader is already acquainted; but he could not refrain from a smile as Barecolt went on to detail all his proceedings with regard to Sir John Hotham; and as the narrator clearly saw he amused his listener, he dwelt, perhaps, longer than necessary upon all the particulars. At length, however, growing somewhat impatient for facts, the young nobleman again pointed to the tankard, saying, "Drink, captain, and let me hear of your meeting with my sister's young friend. I see how you obtained your own freedom—what more?"

"Why, you see, my lord," replied Barecolt, "as I hinted to your lordship just before I left the good town of Nottingham, I had obtained a little information which showed me that Master Dry, of Longsoaken, had taken pretty Mistress Arrah to Hull, and I had laid a little scheme for setting her free, thinking that I should thereby please your lordship."

"Unluckily!" replied Lord Walton, gravely; "nothing could give me greater pleasure than to have this young lady freed from the hands of one who combines the characters of hypocrite, cheat, and ruffian in his own person."

"Well, my lord, such being the case," continued Barecolt, "and finding myself suddenly in Hull, I determined to seek even if I did not find; and as the man who was sent with me, partly as my guide, partly as a spy, was walking with me through the town to seek for an inn at which to lodge, I determined, if possible, to ascertain if Dry was in any of them, and to take up my quarters in the same. He recommended the Lion and the Rose, and half a dozen places; but I thought to myself, 'Dry will not put up at a first-rate victualler's; and I accordingly fixed upon one which I judged to be the sort of house at which he would stop. In I accordingly went, and while taking a glass of wine at the bar, who should appear, followed close by the watch, but the worshipful Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, heavily drunk. He was speedily carried to his bed, and from that moment I determined to remain at the Swan, and make use of my advantages. I found

the landlady an excellent good woman, and speedily opened a communication with her upon the subject of the young lady. She was a little shy at first, indeed, but I soon brought matters round by telling her that I had been sent especially to Hull by your lordship to set Mistress Arrah free."

"That was wrong," said Lord Walton, somewhat sternly; "however, no matter, as it did no harm. What did you discover there?"

"Why, I found out," continued Captain Barecolt, "that the very inn at which we were was that where the poor young lady had been brought when first she came to England; that her mother was a very beautiful lady at that time, much like herself, but taller; that she died in that house of a terrible fever that was then raging; that Mistress Arrah herself had wellnigh died of it; and that an old man, whom they called Sergeant Neil, was then in attendance upon the two ladies as a sort of servant, though he afterward passed as her grandfather, they say."

"He did, he did," answered Lord Walton, musing. "This is a strange story, Captain Barecolt; let me hear more."

"Why, I suspect the young lady knows more than I do, my lord," replied Barecolt, "and the tankard is empty."

"There is more here," answered Lord Walton, pushing over another flagon from the opposite side of the board; "what more did you hear?"

"Why, I instantly went and saw Mistress Arrah herself," continued Barecolt, after having assuaged his thirst, "and found that old Dry had swept Sergeant Neil's house of all his papers at his death, especially some that the old man had told the young lady where to find; and that he now dragged her about with him, treating her sometimes well, sometimes ill, as he was in the humour, pretending to be her guardian, and asking for a Mister O'Donnell who lives in Hull. From all this, I divined that the old hypocrite had got better information out of the old sergeant's papers than we had, and that he intended to marry the young lady, or, perhaps, gain possession of her property."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Lord Walton, with a scornful smile curling his lip.

"Well, my lord, I do not know," answered Barecolt; "but, as she is so very beautiful, even such a stockfish as that might think it by no means an unpleasant way of getting hold of her fortune, to make her his wife. But, as I was saying, having taken this fancy, I determined to see what papers the old man had with him, and consequently I walked straight into his room, where he lay like a drunken sow, snoring in his bed, and I rummaged his bags till I found all the papers he had with him. I found only one that referred to this business, however, and it was but a string of questions to be asked of this Mister O'Donnell. However, they proved clearly that what the good landlady of the Swan had told was quite true, as your lordship shall see presently."

The worthy captain then went on to tell all that had taken place subsequently, mingling what portion of falsehood with his truth he might think proper, and taking especial care to make whatever advantage fell in his way by accident, appear to have been obtained by his own skill and calculation. Lord Walton was not deceived by his representations; nor can he be said to have been aware of his misrepresenta-

tions. He took in the general facts, casting away, as is usually the case with men of high mind, the minor circumstances. Thus he was aware that Captain Barecolt had greatly served one in whom he took a deep interest; but the small particulars of that personage's skill and judgment in effecting the object he cared very little about, and gave no attention to it whatever, hearing the details, indeed, but without pausing upon them for consideration, and waiting for the principal results.

"We must find means," he said, at length "of having farther information from this Master O'Donnell. He is evidently aware of all the facts."

"Ay, and he has made the lady aware of them too, my lord," rejoined Barecolt, emptying the second tankard, "or, at least, some of them, for when I came up after having lingered behind at the gates for a short time, in order to give the enemies the change, I found him in close conference with her, and the last words he spoke were to bid her tell no one but yourself or your sister."

"So she said, I recollect," replied Lord Walton; "I will hear more from her, and perhaps, Captain Barecolt, if you be not otherwise engaged in the king's service, I may ask you to have the goodness to employ yourself farther in this affair."

"That I will do most gladly, my lord," replied Barecolt; "I remember well, when in the year thirty-five I was requested by—"

"Oh, I neither doubt your capacity nor your zeal, my good sir," answered the young nobleman, interrupting the anecdote, "and the reward shall be equal to the service performed. I will now, however, go and converse with my friend, Lord Beverley, for a short time; to-morrow I will talk over the matter with Mistress Arrah Neil; and, as I suppose you will think it fit to hasten over to give an account of what has taken place to his majesty, we can speak of what is farther to be done by the way. In the mean time, let me see the paper you mentioned; I should like to think over the contents during the night."

Barecolt put his hand in his pocket, but the moment after he gave a sudden start, and then looked round the table from place to place, as if he were trying to recollect who had sat in each particular seat. Then turning to Lord Walton with a look of horror and consternation, he exclaimed, "Diggory Falgate! where is poor, jolly Diggory Falgate?"

"I do not know whom you speak of," replied Lord Walton; "what has he to do with this affair?"

"The paper is in his bundle," cried Barecolt with increasing dismay; "and we have left the poor devil outside in the hands of those rascally Roundheads, whom he hates as a cat hates salt."

"But who is he?" demanded Lord Walton; "this is the first time you have mentioned his name."

As Captain Barecolt was about to give a true and particular account of Diggory Falgate, however, William, Lady Margaret's servant, entered the hall, and addressing the young nobleman, informed him that the Earl of Beverley would be glad to speak with him as soon as he had done supper.

"I will come to him directly," replied Charles Walton, taking a step or two towards the door; and then pausing, he turned again to Barecolt,

saying, "As to this friend of yours, I think you had better take any of the people who may be still up, and seek for him with torches as far as the fight continued. The road must be clear by this time, for the adversary suffered much, and would not like the neighbourhood; but you had better have five or six men with you, and firearms. A watch shall be kept in case you need help; and I shall not be in bed for an hour or two. The poor fellow may be lying wounded."

"Oh, I need little help in such cases, my lord," replied Barecolt; "but as we may have to carry him hither if he be wounded, I will take some men with me, and go directly."

While our worthy captain proceeded to execute this resolution, Lord Walton walked on towards the chamber which had been assigned to his wounded friend; but as he passed near the room in which Lady Margaret usually sat, he turned thither for a moment to see whether his sister and fair Arrah Neil had yet retired to rest. He found his aunt alone, however; and in answer to his inquiries, she replied, "I have sent them both to bed, Charles. Poor things, they have had much fatigue of body, and more of mind. I never leave my book till the house clock strikes one, but that was no reason why I should keep them waking."

"Well, dear aunt Margaret, I am going to see Francis Beverley, and will return to you ere you retire to rest," said Charles Walton; and, proceeding on his way, he found, with some difficulty, his friend's room, and went in.

"Charles," said the earl, who was lying, with a lamp on the table beside him, and several papers in his hand, which he seemed to have been reading attentively, "I feel that I cannot ride to-morrow, and the time it would take to send a messenger hither from York is too valuable to be lost. You must take the first tidings to the king, and I will follow as soon as some conveyance arrives. I will relate to you all that has happened since we parted; but tell his majesty, I beg, that it was no weak idleness which prevented me from hurrying on to give him all the information I possess."

"He knows you too well to imagine such a thing," replied Lord Walton; "but I can shorten your narrative till your arrival at Hull. All our first adventures I have heard from Captain Barecolt."

"And a glorious tale he has made of it, doubtless," said the earl, "however, all that is of little importance in comparison with that which is to follow." He then went on to give an account of his various interviews with Sir John Hotham, of which, as the reader is already acquainted with the particulars, I will give no detail. The result, however, is still to be told, and it was related by Lord Beverley in few words.

"At length," he said, "I found that the good governor was not tired of his position, so deeply offended with the conduct of the Parliament, so anxious of returning to his duty, and so willing to risk all but his head to restore Hull to the king, that it wanted but some excuse to save his honour, to induce him to do all that we can desire. It was finally agreed between us, then, that if the king would advance against the city, and fire but a shot at it, Sir John would capitulate, and deliver that important place into his majesty's hands. There are many minor particulars to be told; but this principal fact should be communicated to the king without the loss of a day, as it may decide his future movements."

"Without the loss of an hour," replied Lord Walton; "for when I left his majesty, he told me that I had barely time to reach this place and return before the army would be in motion. This is an important affair indeed, for the example set by Hull would bring over a dozen other towns; and even if it did not, the possession of a port in the North is worth any jewel in his crown. I would set off this very moment, but that both men and horses are so much fatigued that we should lose more time by going than by staying for a few hours' repose. To-morrow morning, however, at daybreak, I will set out; I shall not be able to see my sister, indeed; but it is perhaps as well to avoid leaving-taking, and you must console her, Francis. Had you not better write to the king?"

"No," replied the earl, "I think not. I have been considering that question while you were away; but, looking to the danger of the roads, and the risk of your being intercepted, as well as the peril to Sir John Hotham if such should be the case, it will be more prudent to bear nothing but the tidings by word of mouth."

"I believe you are right," replied Lord Walton; "and such being the case, Beverley, I will at once go and prepare for the journey. Having all the facts, I need not disturb you to-morrow morning before I go."

"Perhaps I had better see you," answered the earl, "for something might strike me in the night which I might wish to say."

"Well, then, I will come in," rejoined Lord Walton; "and now, good-night! Sleep if you can, Francis, and let not all the thoughts of this affair disturb your repose."

"I want that quality of a great man, Charles," answered the earl, with a smile. "I cannot cast off the thought of things that have occupied me the moment that action has ceased. A quick imagination is a curse as well as a blessing. In bright days it is a happiness indeed, but in those of shadow and darkness it but tends to increase the gloom. Good-night, good-night."

Lord Walton shook his hand and retired; and then, rejoining Lady Margaret, announced to her his intention of setting off at daybreak the next morning. We will not pause upon all the little particulars of their conversation: the discussion which took place as to whether it would be better and kinder for the young nobleman to take leave of his sister or not, or the other arrangements that he made for leaving four of his men behind him to give aid and protection to Lady Margaret and her household, several of her own servants being absent at the time. Before he retired to rest he wrote a short note to his sister, and another to Arrah Neil, begging her to write the statement which the hurry of his departure prevented him from hearing in person; and then giving orders for his horses to be saddled by daybreak, he only farther paused to inquire whether poor Falgate had been found. Barecolt and his companions, however, had not yet returned; but while Charles Walton was undressing, the gallant captain made his appearance in his room, and with a woful face informed him that no trace of the merry painter could be discovered.

"Then he has certainly been taken prisoner," replied Lord Walton, "and we cannot help him. We have more important business in hand, Captain Barecolt, now; by what Lord Beverley tells me, I am induced to return to the king with all speed. I think you had better accompany me."

and if so, remember, I am in the saddle by day-break."

"I am with you, my lord," replied Barecotti; "and as human beings must sleep, I will even go to bed for the present."

"Do so," replied Lord Walton; "I shall follow the same course."

But before he put his resolution into effect, after Captain Barecotti left him the young nobleman fell into a fit of deep thought, from which he did not rouse himself for nearly an hour. When he did rise from his seat, however, he said, in a low, sad voice to himself, "'Tis as well I am going."

Annie Walton slept well, but Arrah Neil was restless and agitated; and after a few hours of disturbed slumber, she woke and saw the blue faint light of the first dawn looking through the curtains of the room. She turned to gaze upon her fair companion, and marked with a smile the tranquil repose she was enjoying. "Sleep, sleep, sweet lady," she murmured; "and oh! may no headache ever keep your eyes from rest."

The moment after, she heard the sound of jingling arms and horses' feet, and rising quietly, she approached the window and looked out. The opposite room, which, as we have described it, was destined for a sitting-room, commanded the view at the back of Langley Hall, but the bedroom was turned towards the court and the drawbridge; and as poor Arrah Neil gazed forth from the window, she saw a party of five horsemen mounted, and Lord Walton putting his foot in the stirrup. The next moment he was in the saddle; and after speaking a few words to his aunt's servant William, who was standing beside his horse, he rode over the drawbridge, and at a quick pace pursued the way to York.

"He is gone without my seeing him," murmured Arrah Neil to herself; and then creeping quietly to bed again, she turned her face to the pillow and deluged it with tears.

CHAPTER XXX.

"Nay, do not drag me so; I will go right willingly, my masters," cried poor Diggory Falgate. "I was there with them upon compulsion. It is hard to be made prisoner by one's friends as well as enemies."

"Hold thy prating tongue, liar," replied one of the troopers, who were bearing off the painter across the country towards Hull, which lay at about ten miles' distance; the course that the earl and his party had pursued having been rendered, by the various accidents of the journey, very circuitous. "Hold thy prating tongue, liar, or I will strike thee over the pate. Did we not see thee at their heels, galloping with the best?"

"But no man can say that he saw me draw a sword in their behalf," answered Falgate.

"Because thou hadst no sword to draw," rejoined the man. "And thou mayest be sure that to-morrow morning thou wilt be swinging by the neck in the good town of Hull, for the death of Captain Bitten and the rest."

"I killed them out," said Falgate, in a deprecatory tone.

"What! wilt thou prate?" rejoined the trooper, striking him in the ribs with the hilt of his

sword. But at that moment, one who seemed in command rode back from the front, and bade the man forbear.

"Come hither beside me," he said, addressing Falgate, who, in the darkness, could not see his face to judge whether it was stern or not. "You are a Malignant: deny it not, for it will not avail you. You are a Malignant; and the blood of Christian men has been shed by those who were with you. Your life is forfeit; and there is but one way by which to save it."

"What is that?" asked Falgate. "Life is not like a bad groat, only fit to be cast into the kennel; and I will save mine if I can."

"That is wise," answered the soldier. "You can save it if you will. You have but to tell truly and honestly who they are who were with you, and what was their errand in these parts. You know it right well, therefore deny it not."

"Nay, I do not know, right worshipful sir," replied the painter.

"I am not worshipful," answered the man; "but if thou dost not know, I am sorry, for thou hast lost a chance of life."

"But only hear how I came to be with them," cried poor Falgate. "I met the long-nosed man by chance in Hull; and finding him in godly company, and some of the governor's people with him, I thought there could be no harm in going with him to York, whither business called me."

"But he in the buff coat," asked the soldier, "who is he?"

"Of him I know less than the other," rejoined the painter; "for he came up with us on the road, as we stopped at a little inn to bait our horses. There was with him then a Colonel Warren, who, after leaving us, returned to Hull with a pious man, one Stumpborough, who had with him a troop of horse—"

"We know all that," replied the soldier, gravely. "But as it is so, you must prepare to die to-morrow. I say not that you lie unto us. It may be that you speak truth; but it is needful in these times that one should die for an example; and as you are a Malignant, for your speech proves it, 'tis well you should be the man." Thus saying, he rode on again, without giving time for Falgate to answer, and leaving him in the hands of the troopers, as before.

The party, however, had suffered such loss, that the number was now but small; and the poor painter, who by no means loved the idea of his promised suspension in the morning-air of Hull, could hear the buzz of an eager but low-toned conversation going on in front, without being able to distinguish the words. He thought, indeed, that he caught the term "church" frequently repeated, but of that he was not sure. And though with a stout heart he resolved to say nothing, either of what he knew or suspected, it must be confessed he shook a little as he rode along.

At length, after an hour and a half's farther ride, they began to approach the Humber, and the moon, shining out, showed Falgate scenes which he had often passed through in former days, upon journeys of business or of pleasure. Now they came to a village, in which was swinging, before a fast-closed house, a sign of his own printing; and now a hamlet, in which he had enjoyed many a merry dance; till at length, passing over a long, bare, desolate piece of land, without tree, or hedgerow, or house, or break, running along the water's edge, they perceived

on a slight elevation an old, time-worn church, resort of parishioners from a wide and thinly-populated tract, the old stone monuments and stony aisles of which had often filled the somewhat imaginative heart of the painter with awe and awful visions, when he visited it on Sunday evening in the decline of the year.

About five hundred yards farther on was a stately house, where the sexton lived; and, appearing suddenly before the gate of the churchyard, the commander of the party bade one of the men ride on and get the key.

"What are they going to do?" thought Falgate. "The profane villains are not going to bury their horses in a church, surely. Well, I'll be glad enough of rest anywhere, for Hull is three miles off, and I do not think my skin will hold out."

While he had been thus reasoning with himself, one of the troopers had got off his horse, and advancing through the little wicket of the churchyard, tried the door of the church:

"It is open," he cried; "they have left their chapel-house open."

The other man was instantly called back, and Falgate was then ordered to dismount. He observed, however, that the soldiers in general put their saddles, and he advanced with some expectation, accompanied by the commander, to a door where the other trooper still stood. Here he halted suddenly, however, asking, in a lamentable tone,

"You are not going to leave me here alone at night, surely?"

"Not alone," answered the man; "we will sit guard in the porch to watch you; and you will have full time to prepare your mind for to-morrow morning, and to turn in your head whether you will tell us who your companions are, before the rope is round your neck. You may speak now if you will."

But Falgate was faithful to the last; and though he by no means approved of being shut in the church all night, he repeated that he did not tell, for he did not know.

"Well, then," rejoined his captor, "here you may rest; but think well of the condition of your soul, young man, for nothing will save you should you remain obstinate."

Thus saying, he thrust him into the building and closed the door. The poor painter now had some conversation without in regard to the key, which, it appeared, was not in the lock, but a consultation was held as to whether it could be sent for; but the voice of the commander was heard at length, saying,

"Never mind. We have not time to stay. It is a good watch; that is all that is needed."

"But if he try to escape?" asked the trooper.

"Shoot him through the head with your pistol," answered the other voice. "As well die by a cord."

The conversation then ceased, and Falgate heard the sound of horses' feet the next minute, rushing down the hill. The situation of Falgate was to himself by no means pleasant, and indeed few are the men who would find themselves particularly at their ease, shut up for whole nights within an old church, and with the probability of death before them for the next morning. Silence, and midnight solitude, and the proximity of graves, and shrouds, and rustling clay, are things well calculated to excite the imagination even of the cold and calculating, to damp the warm energies of hope,

and open all the sources of terror and superstitions awe within us. How often, in the warm daylight, and in the midst of the gay and busy world, does man, roused for a moment by some accidental circumstance to a conviction of the frail tenure by which life is held, think of death and all that may follow it, with no other sensation than a calm melancholy. It is because every object around him, everything that he sees, everything that he hears, and everything that he feels, are so full of life, that he cannot think death near. He sees it but in the dim and misty perspective of future years, with all its grim features softened and indistinct. But when he hears no sound of any living thing; when his eye rests upon nothing moving with the warm energies of animation; when all is as dark as the vault, as silent as the grave, it is then that, if the thought of death presents itself, it comes near—horribly near. Clearer for the obscurity around, more distinct and tangible from the stillness of all things, death becomes a living being to our fancy, with his icy hand upon our brow, his barbed dart close at our heart. We see him, feel him; hear the dread summons of his choral voice, and prepare for the extinction of the light within, the coffin's narrow bed, the mould and corruption of the tomb.

Poor Falgate had hitherto tried to fancy that the announcement of his fate for the morrow had been merely a threat; but now, when he was left alone in the old church, with no one near him to speak to, with not a sound but the sighing of the night-wind through some broken panes in the high casement, his convictions became very different. He felt his way with his hands from pillar to pillar, towards a spot where a thin streak of moonlight crossed the nave, and seated himself sadly upon a bench that he found near. He there sat and tortured himself for half an hour, thinking over all the bold and infamous things the Parliament party had done, and clearly deducing thence what they might probably do in his own case. He loved not the thought of death at all, as it now presented itself to his mind; the hero's enthusiasm was gone; he had no desire to be a martyr; but of all sorts of death, that of the cord seemed the worst. And yet, what was to be done? Could he betray the confidence of others? could he flinch from what he conceived to be a duty? No; though he felt a little weakness, he was not the man to do that; and he said again to himself that he would rather die. But still he turned with repugnance from that close grappling with the thought of dying which the scene and the hour forced upon him; he tried to think of something else; he strove to recall the early days when he had last stood in that aisle, and many a boyish prank he had played in years long gone; but the image of death would present itself amid all, like a scull in a flower-garden, and the very sweet ideas that he summoned up to banish it but made it look more terrible.

In the mean while, the moon gradually got round, till she poured a fuller flood of light into the building, showing the tombs and old monumental effigies upon the walls and in the aisle; and many a wild legend and village tale came back to Falgate's memory, of ghosts having been seen issuing from the vaults beneath the church, and wandering down even to the gates of Hull. The painter was a firm believer in apparitions of all kinds; and he had often quaked, with a

sort of foolish bravado, to see a ghost; but now, when, if ever, he was likely to be gratified, he did not quite so much like the realization of his desires. He thought, nevertheless, that he could face one, if one did come; but then arose the sad idea that he might very soon be one of their shadowy companions himself, wandering for the allotted term beneath the pale glimpses of the moon.

Suddenly a thought struck him: might he not, perchance, employ the semblance of that state to facilitate his own escape. Doubtless, the man placed to keep guard would not long remain upon his dull watch without closing an eye, after a long day's march and a hard fight; the door was not locked; he could open it, and go out; and could he but so disguise himself as to appear like the inhabitant of another world, if the sentinel did wake, he would, most likely, be so stupefied and alarmed that he would let him pass, or miss his aim if he did fire. Fulgate remembered the words of the officer as he had retired, "As well die so as by a cord;" and he resolved he would make the attempt at least. A daring and enterprising spirit seized upon him: he felt he could be a hero in ghostly attire; and the only difficulty was to procure the proper habiliments. At first he thought of making a shift with his own shirt; but then he remembered that the length thereof was somewhat scanty; and he had never heard of ghosts with drapery above their knees.

However, as when one schoolboy opens a door into a forbidden piece of ground, and puts his head out, a dozen after are sure to follow, and hurry him on before them, so the thought of becoming a ghost seemed to bring a thousand other cunning devices with it; and at length good Diggory Falgate asked himself if the vestry might not be open, and a surplice might not be found therein. He determined to ascertain; and, creeping up to the door which he had often seen the parson of the parish pass through, he lifted the latch, and to his joy found that it was not locked. All, however, was dark within, and the poor painter, entering cautiously, groped about, not knowing well where to seek for that which he wanted. Suddenly his hand struck against something, hanging apparently from a peg in the wall; but he soon ascertained that the texture was not that of linen, and went on, still feeling along the sides of the little room. In a moment after, he came to something softer and more pliant, with the cold, glassy feel of linen upon it, and taking it down, he mentally said, "This must be a surplice." He crept back with it into the moonlight in the church, treading indeed like a ghost, or only in anticipation of the character he was about to assume, but also in palpable terror, lest he should call the attention of the guard at the church door by tripping over a mat, or stumbling against a bench. The white and snowy garment, however, the emblem of innocence, was there in his hand, and he gazed all over it, inquiring in his own mind how he was to put it on. He knew not the back from the front; he scarcely knew the head from the tail; and seldom has a poor schoolboy gazed at the ass's bridge, in the dry but reason-giving pages of Euclid, with more utter bewilderment and want of comprehension, than Diggory Falgate now stared at the surplice. As he thus stood, addressing mock inquiries to the folds of white linen, he suddenly started, thinking he heard a noise; but, after listening a moment, in

his actual position, without catching any farther sound, he quietly crept up to the great door of the church, and bent both eye and ear to the key-hole, to ascertain whether the sentinel was awake and watching, or not.

The only thing that met his ear, when he first applied the latter organ to the task of discovery, was a loud and sonorous snore; and, looking through the aperture, he found, by the light of the moon, which was shining into the porch, that the guard had seated himself on one of the benches at the side of the door, and with his legs stretched out across the only means of egress, had given way to weariness, and was indulging in a very refreshing sleep, while his horse was seen cropping the green grass within the wall of the churchyard.

The good painter was calculating the chances of being able to pass the out-stretched limbs of the sentinel without awakening him, and screwing his courage to the sticking point—to use Lady Macbeth's pork-butcherish figure—when suddenly he was startled and cast into a cold perspiration by hearing a sound at the farther end of the church. All was silent the moment after; but the noise had been so distinct while it lasted, that there was no doubting the evidence of his ears; and the only question was what it could proceed from—was it natural or supernatural? Was it accidental or intentional? Diggory Falgate could not at all divine; till at length, encouraged by its cessation, he began to think that he might have left the door of the vestry open, and the wind might have blown down some book. Yet the sound had been sharp as well as heavy; more like the fall of a piece of old iron than that of a volume of Homilies, the Prayer-book, or the Psalter. He determined to see, however; and, sitting down for a moment to gather courage, and to ascertain that the proper without had not been roused by the noise that had alarmed himself, he listened, till, mingled with the beating of his own heart, he heard the comfortable snore of the guard once more. Then, thinking that at any time he could call the good man to his aid, if he encountered ghost or goblin too strong for him, he shuffled himself into the surplice, and crept, with the stealthy step of a cat, up the nave towards the vestry.

When he was about two thirds up the church, and was just leaning against a bench to take breath, another sound met his ear. It was that of a deep voice speaking low, and seemed to come almost from below his feet.

"They must be gone now," said the invisible tongue. "You hear all is silent."

"I do not know," said another, in tones somewhat shriller. "Hush! I thought I heard a noise."

"Pooh! the rustling of the casements with the wind," rejoined the other; "I cannot stay all night: unshade the lantern, and let us to work."

If a fragment of superstitious doubt as to the interlocutors of this dialogue being of a ghostly character had lingered in the mind of Diggory Falgate, the words about unshading the lantern removed it completely; and the next instant a faint and misty light was seen issuing from a low, narrow doorway, which had apparently been left open on the opposite side of the church, towards the eastern angle.

"Some vagabonds robbing the vaults," thought the painter to himself; "I will see what they are about, at all risks. Perchance I may frighten them, make them run over the sentinel, and

escape in the confusion. If he shoots one of them instead of me, it will be no great matter; and of course, if these men are as anxious to get away as I am, we shall make common cause, and be too strong for him. But I will watch for a minute first, and let them be fairly at their work, as they call it, before I show myself."

Thus thinking, with a noiseless step he advanced towards the door leading from the main body of the building to the vaults below, guided by the light, which continued to glimmer faintly up, casting a misty ray upon the communion-table. When he approached the arch, he looked carefully forward at every step; but nothing could he see till he came to the top of the stone stairs, when he perceived a dark lantern, with the shade drawn back, standing on the ground at the bottom. No human beings were visible, however, though he heard a rustling sound in the vault, as if some living creatures were at no great distance; and the next moment there came a sort of gurgling noise, as if some fluid were poured out of a narrow-necked bottle. An instant after, the first voice he had heard observed in a pleasant and well-satisfied tone, "That's very good! genuine Nantes, I declare."

"Ay, that it is," answered the second voice; "the stomach requires comfort in such a cold and dismal place as this."

"Oh, 'tis nothing when one is used to it," rejoined the first speaker; "but come, we had better do the business. There stands the coffin. You bring the mallet, and I will take the chisel and bar."

Digory Falgate did not like their proceedings at all, though he would by no means have objected to a glass of cordial waters himself. But they were evidently about to break open one of the coffins; every word showed it; to violate the sanctity of the grave—to disturb the ashes of the dead; and the poor painter had sufficient refinement of feeling to think that the drinking of intoxicating liquors, while so engaged, was an aggravation of their offence. The colloquation of "Genuine Nantes, I declare," with "There stands the coffin," shocked and horrified him; and he paused for a moment to consider, feeling as if it would render him almost a partaker in the sacrilege if he were to descend into the vault. A moment's thought, however, settled this case of conscience; and by the time that he had settled his plan, he heard a hollow noise, as if some hard substance had struck against an empty chest.

"Now is the time," he thought; "they are busy at their hellish work."

There stood the lantern on the ground beneath; the men were evidently at some small distance; if he could get possession of the light and shade it, they were at his mercy; and the only difficulty was how to descend the stairs without calling their attention. Recollecting, however, that it was the invariable practice of ghosts, whatever sounds they might produce with any other organs with which they may be endowed, to make no noise with their feet, the good painter stooped down, took off his shoes, and put them in his pockets. Then, with a quiet and a stealthy step, he began the descent, totally unperceived by those who were by this time busily engaged wrenching and tearing some well-fastened woodwork.

Stooping down before he quite reached the bottom of the steps, Digory Falgate looked into the vault, and immediately perceived two men, both of them somewhat advanced in life, and one

a thin, tall, Puritanical-looking person, dressed in black, raising, with a chisel and mallet, the lid of a coffin which stood upon the ground. Forty or fifty others—some small and narrow, some large—were within the pale glimmer of the lantern, and the painter's imagination filled up the dark space which the rays did not reach with similar memories of our mortality. On his left hand, near the foot of the stairs, were four coffins placed in a row, with three others laid crosswise upon them, and all raised two or three feet from the floor by tressels. There was a narrow sort of lane behind, between them and the damp wall, and taking another step down, he brought himself as far on that side as possible.

Just at that moment one of the men turned a little, so as to bring his profile within the painter's view, and he instantly recognised a face that he had seen at the Swan inn in Hull, the day before his expedition with Captain Barecolt and Arrah Neil.

"I'll wager any money it is that old villain, Dry, of Longoaken, whom I have heard them talk so much about," thought Falgate; but he was not suffered to carry his meditations on that subject farther, for Mr. Dry, turning his head away again towards his companion, said,

"I cannot see; get the lantern."

The painter had just time to slip behind the pile of coffins he had observed, and to crouch down, before the other man, after having given another vigorous wrench at the lid, laid down the bar he had in his hands, and moved towards the foot of the stairs. The rustle of the surplice even seemed to catch his ear, for he stopped for a moment apparently to listen; but the next instant he advanced again, took up the lantern, looked round with a somewhat nervous stare, and then returned to Mr. Dry.

"Did you not hear a noise?" he asked, in a low voice.

Mr. Dry stopped in his proceedings, and evidently trembled. Their agitation gave courage to the painter, and creeping on so as to bring himself nearly on a line with them, he ventured to utter a low groan. Both of the culprits started, and gazed around with hair standing on end and teeth chattering.

"Now's the time!" thought Falgate; and, taking two steps farther towards the end of the lane formed by the coffins and the wall, he uttered another groan, followed by a shrill, unearthly shriek, and then started up to his full height, as if he were rising from the midst of the pile of mortal dust upon his right. The rays fell straight upon the white garments and the face of this unexpected apparition, pale and worn as he was by fatigue and fear; and, struck with terror and consternation, the limbs of the two men at first refused to move; but when they saw this awful figure advancing straight towards them with another hollow groan, they both darted away, the one crying,

"Through the church, through the church! It will catch you before you can reach the other door," and Mr. Dry following at full speed towards the steps by which Falgate had descended.

Not liking to be left in the vault in the dark, the painter sprang after them with another wild shriek; but fortune favoured him more than skill, for just as the foremost of the fugitives was mounting the steps, Mr. Dry seized hold of his cloak to stay his trembling limbs; the other, who was the sexton, in the agony of his terror fancied the ghost had caught him, dropped it

lantern, and rushed on with his companion clinging close to him. Falgate instantly picked up the light before it was extinguished, and drew the shade over it; and almost at the same moment he heard the door above banged to by those he was pursuing, and a bolt drawn; for they did not stay to inquire whether spiritual beings are to be stopped by material substances or not.

The painter paused and listened; he heard quick steps beating the pavement above, and then a door open. The next instant came a loud shout, and then the report of a pistol; then a shout again, then a momentary silence, and then the quick galloping of a horse.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Diggory; "they have cleared the way for me, and left me master of the field of battle;" and he drew back the blind from the lantern and looked about him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was a warm and glowing evening, though autumn had spread his brown mantle over the trees; and while fair Arrah Neil and Lady Margaret Langley sat in the old lady's usual drawing-room, with the windows open as in midsummer, Annie Walton was seated under a little clump of beeches at the back of Langley Hall, with the Earl of Beverley, somewhat recovered from his wound, stretched on the dry grass at her feet.

They were happy enough to enjoy long pauses in conversation; for their mutual love, as the reader has been already given to understand, was known and acknowledged by each; and their minds, starting from one common point, would run on in meditation along paths, separate indeed, but not far distant, and then, like children playing in a meadow, would return to show each other what flowers they had gathered.

"How calm and sweet the evening is," said the earl, after one of these breaks. "One would hardly fancy the year so far advanced. I love these summer days in autumn, dearest. They often make me look on to after years, and think of the tempered joys and tranquil pleasures of old age, calling up the grand calm picture of latter life left us by a great Roman orator, when the too vivid sun of youth and manhood has somewhat sunk in the sky; and we have freshness, as well as warmth, though not the fervid heat of midsummer."

"I love them too," answered Miss Walton; "and I think that in every season of the year there are days and hours of great beauty and grandeur. Though I like the early summer best, yet I can admire the clear winter sky, and the dazzling expanse of white that robes the whole earth in ermine, and even the autumnal storm with its fierce blast, loaded with sleet, and hail, and withered leaves. But I was thinking, Francis, of how peaceful all things seem around, and what a horrible and sinful thing it is for men to deform the beautiful earth, and disturb the quiet of all God's creation with wild wars and senseless contests."

"A woman's thought, dear Annie," replied the earl; "and doubtless it is sinful; but, alas! the sin is shared among so many, that it would in any war be difficult to portion it out. 'Tis not alone to be divided among those who fight, or among those who lead; it is not to be laid at the door of those who first take arms, or those

who follow; it is not to be charged to the apparent aggressor; but every one who, by folly, weakness, passion, prejudice, or hatred, lays the foundation for strife in after years, has a share in the crime. Oh! how many are the causes of war! Deeds often remote by centuries have their part; and always, many an act done long before rises up—like an acorn buried in the ground, and springing into a tree—and is the seed from which after contentions spring. Even in this very contest in which we are now engaged, though we may see and say who is now right and who wrong, yet what man can separate the complex threads of the tangled skein of the past, and tell who most contributed to bring about that state which all wise men must regret? Years, long years before this, the foundation was laid in the tyranny of Henry—in the proud sway of Elizabeth—in the weak despotism of James—in the persecution of the papists of one reign—in that of the Puritans in another—in lavish expenditure in vicious indulgence—in favouritism and minions—in the craving ambition of some subjects—in the discontented spirit of others—in the interested selfishness, the offended vanity, the mortified pride of thousands—in weak yieldings to unjust demands—in stubborn resistance of just claims—in fond adherence to ancient forms—in an insatiate love of novelty and change; and all this spread through generations, dear Annie, all of which have their part in the result and the responsibility."

"Too wide a range, Francis, for my weak mind to take in," replied the lady; "but I do know, it is sad to see a land that once seemed happy, overspread with rapine and wrong, and deluged in blood."

"To hear no more the church-bells ringing gayly," said the earl, with a smile, "or to see the market and the fair deserted. They may indeed seem trivial things, but yet they are among those that bring home to our hearts most closely the disruption of all those ties that bind man together in social union."

"But there are in the homes of every one more terrible proofs than that of the great evil," answered Miss Walton. "Never to see a friend, a brother, a father quit our side without the long train of fearful inquiries. When shall I see him again? Will it be forever? How shall we meet, and where? Oh, Francis, how many a heart feels this like mine throughout the land! Danger, accident, and death, at other times dim, distant forms that we hardly see, are now become familiar thoughts, the companion of every fireside; and calm security and smiling hope are banished afar, as if never to return."

"Oh, they will come back, dear Annie," replied the earl. "This is a world of change. The April day of man's fluctuating passions has never cloud or sunshine long. No sooner does the calm light of peace overspread the sky, than storms are seen gathering on the horizon; and no sooner does war and tumult imitate the tempest in destruction and ruin, than a glimpse of the blue heaven gleams through the shadow, and gives promise of brighter moments at another hour."

"But that hour is often a lifetime," answered the lady. "We are but at the beginning. Shall we ever see the close?"

"Who can say?" rejoined Lord Beverley, "but one thing is certain, Annie. We are under God's will, my beloved. He can lengthen or shorten the time of trial at his pleasure; we

ourselves, and all the men with whom or against whom we may act, are but his instruments. We can no more stride beyond the barrier he has fixed, than the sea can pass the boundary of sands with which he has surrounded it. "Our task is to do that which we conscientiously believe it is our duty to him to do in the circumstances wherein he has placed us; and we may be sure that, however much we may be mistaken, if such is our object and purpose, the errors of understanding will never be visited on our heads as crimes by him who knows the capabilities of every creature that he has made, and can judge between intention and execution. God punishes sins and not mistakes, dear girl; he tries the heart as well as the actions, and holds the balance even between each; and though we may suffer in this world for the errors of others or for our own, there is exhaustless compensation in the hand of the Almighty for those who seek to do his will, and those who wilfully disobey it."

"I have learned a lesson on that score from the dear girl within there," replied Miss Walton; and as she spoke, she naturally turned her eyes to the room where she knew Arrah Neil was sitting. "What can be the matter?" she continued, instantly; "see, Arrah is making eager signs to us to come in!"

The earl rose slowly and with difficulty, and before he had advanced more than a step or two with Annie Walton, who hastened anxiously to return to the house, Arrah Neil, with her sunny brown hair floating wildly about her face, came out running to meet them.

"Quick, quick, my lord, for pity's sake!" she cried; "there is a large body of men before the drawbridge. The people are holding them in parley: the Lady Margaret says she can conceal you from all eyes, if you make haste." She spoke with breathless eagerness, and Lord Beverley hurried his pace as much as possible, but with perfect calmness, turning with a smile to Annie Walton, and saying,

"Fresh evils of civil war, Annie! but I fear not the result."

The time occupied in crossing to the house seemed fearfully long to Miss Walton and Arrah Neil; but they found Lady Margaret waiting tranquilly enough at the small door that led into the meadow, and the old lady's only words were,

"Follow!" to the earl; and, "Wait in the withdrawing-room: they will not let them in till I order it," to her two fair guests. Then leading the way with a calm step, she conducted Lord Beverley up the same stairs and through the same passages which she had followed with her niece on the first night of her stay at Langley Hall; but turning a little to the right at the door of Annie Walton's chamber, she brought the earl into a small detached room, which seemed isolated from every other part of the building.

"Here you will be safe," she said.

"I think not, dear Lady Margaret," replied Lord Beverley, with a smile at what he thought her want of experience in such matters.

"We will see," she answered, advancing to the other side of the room, where stood a huge antique fireplace, with a chimney-piece of rich wrought stone. "No moving pictures, no sliding panels here!" said Lady Margaret; "but place your hand upon that pillar, my good lord, and push it strongly—not strongly towards the hearth. There," she continued as the whole

mass swung back, displaying an aperture large enough for a man to pass, but not without stooping, "you will find a bolt within which will make it as fast as masonry." The stairs lead you into rooms below, where no one can come without my leave. You shall be supplied with all you want. But hark! On my life, they have let the men in. Quick, my lord, and bolt the door. I will send somebody soon; but I must go down, lest those girls make some mistake if questioned."

Lord Beverley entered at once, and feeling over the face of the stone for the bolt, pushed it home, and made the whole secure. He then paused and listened, waiting patiently for several minutes. At first he could hear no sound in the remote and well-covered place where he was concealed; but at length he caught the noise of voices and steps running hither and thither in the house. They came near, passed away into other chambers on the left, returned, sounded in the passage, and then in the adjoining room. He could perceive that several men entered, examined the wainscot, tried every panel, moved every article of furniture, and at length shook the mantelpiece and the stone pillars on either side of the chimney; but the bolt held close and fast, and the receding steps showed him that these unwelcome visitors had turned their course elsewhere.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Good Lady Margaret Langley had seen troublous days, and was well fitted by a strong understanding to deal with them; but one of the advantages of misfortune, if I may use so strange a phrase, is that experience of danger suggests precautions which long prosperity knows not how to take, even in the moment of the greatest need. As soon as she had left the Earl of Beverley, instead of going direct to the part of the house where she heard the voices of her unwished-for visitors, she directed her steps through sundry long and intricate passages, which ultimately led her to a small door communicating with the garden, as she did so, to distinguish the fierce growl of her good dog Basio in the hall, and the querulous tone of an old man calling loudly for someone to remove the hound, showing apparently that some visiting justice was kept at bay by that good sentinal. Passing through the garden, and round by the path across the lawn, Lady Margaret approached the windows of her own withdrawing-room just as a party, consisting of five militia-men, with the Parliamentary justice of Beverley, entered the chamber in haste; and she heard the justice demand in a sharp tone, addressing Miss Walton and Arrah Neil,

"Who are you, young women? What are your names?"

The old lady hurried in to stop anything like an imprudent reply; but she had the satisfaction of hearing her niece answer,

"Nay, sir! Methinks it is for us to ask who you are, and what brings you hither in such rude and intrusive guise."

"Well said, my sweet Annie!" thought Lady Margaret; but, entering quickly, she presented herself before the justice, whom she knew, exclaiming,

"Ha, Master Shortcoat! good-morning to

you. What brings you hither? And who are these men in buff and handelier? I am not fond of seeing such in my house. We had trouble enough with them, or their like, a few nights ago."

"Av, lady, that is what brings us," replied the justice. "I have orders from Hull to inquire into that affair, and to search your house for the bloody-minded malignants here concealed, who slaughtered like lambs a number of golly men even within sight of your door, and then took refuge in Langley Hall. I must search, lady, I must search."

"Search if you will, from the cellars to the garret," replied Lady Margaret; "but the story told me by those who did take refuge here was very different, Master Shortcoat. They said that, peaceably passing along the country, they were attacked by a body of bloody-minded, factious villains, who slaughtered some of them, and drove the rest in here, where, finding some of their companions waiting for them, they issued forth again to punish the knaves who had assailed them."

"It's all a lie, good woman," exclaimed an officer of militia. "But who are these girls? for there was a woman among them."

"You are a rude companion, sirrah," answered Lady Margaret. "These ladies are of my own family. This one my niece, Mistress Anne Walton; and this my cousin, Mistress Arabella Langley."

"Come, come," said another, interposing. "we are wasting time, while perhaps those we seek may be escaping. It is not women we want, but men. Search the house, Master Justice, with all speed. I will go one way with two or three of the men, and you another with the rest."

"Stay, stay," said Justice Shortcoat, "you are too quick: we cannot make due inquest if you interrupt us so. Lady, I require to know who were the persons in your house that went forth to assist the malignants on the night of Wednesday last."

"Why, I have told you already, Master Shortcoat. You must be hard of the ring. Did I not say they were friends of theirs who were waiting here for them? In these times, when subjects are governors and servants masters, how can I keep out any one who chooses to come in? That very night one of them swam the moat and let down the drawbridge for himself. How am I to stop such things? If I could, I would keep every party out that appeared with more than two, be they who they may. I seek but to live a penceable life; but you, and others like you, break in at all hours, disturbing my quiet. Out upon you all! Search, search where you will! You can find nothing here but myself and my own people."

"Well, we will search, lady," replied the officer of militia who had spoken before. "Come, worshipsful Master Shortcoat, let us not waste more time;" and, seizing him by the arm, he dragged rather than led him away.

The moment he was gone, Lady Margaret whispered in Annie Walton's ear. "Quick, Annie! run to the room where all the maidens sit, and tell them, if asked what me in the clothes in the earl's chamber, and the blood upon them, to say that they are those of one who was killed the other night, and that the body was carried away by his comrades. I will to the men's hall and to the kitchen, and do the same. You hear,

sweet Arrah: such must be our tale;" and away the old lady went. But she found the task of communicating this hint somewhat more difficult than she had expected, for the hall was half full of the Parliamentary militia, and she had to send her servants to different parts of the house, one upon one pretence, and another upon another, before she could find the opportunity of speaking with them in private.

In the mean while, she heard with a smile the feet of the justice and his companions running through all the rooms and passages of the wide, rambling pile of building, except those which, separated from the rest by stone partitions, and forming a sort of house within the house, could only be discovered either by one already acquainted with some of the several entrances, or by the line and rule of the architect. She had just done instructing her servants, having omitted, as she thought, not one of the household, when feet were heard descending the principal stairs, and the perquisitions were commenced in that wing of the hall in which the room inhabited by the Earl of Beverley was situated.

In a few minutes, the justice and one of the militia-men returned, carrying a cloak and a heavy riding-boot, and demanding, with a triumphant laugh, "Where is he to whom these belong?"

"In the grave, probably," replied Lady Margaret, with perfect composure. "If you are authorized to take possession of dead men's property, you may keep them; and, indeed, you have a better right to them than I have, for your people shot him; so that you have only to divide the spoil."

"Do you mean to say, Lady Margaret, that the man is dead?" asked Justice Shortcoat, with a look of some surprise and consternation.

"All the better if he be," exclaimed the officer of militia; "'tis but one malignant the less in the world. But let us hear more, worshipsful Master Shortcoat. I don't believe this story. Let us have in the servants one by one—"

"Av, one by one," said the justice, who was one of the men who may be called echoes, and repeat other men's ideas in a very self-satisfied tone. "You see about it, sir, and ensure there be no collusion."

The whole matter was soon arranged; and Lady Margaret, taking her wonted chair, drew an embroidery-frame towards her, through which she passed the needle to and fro with the utmost calmness, while sweet Annie Walton sat with a beating heart beside Arrah Neil, who, with the tranquil fortitude that had now come over her, watched the proceedings of the intruders as if she had been a mere spectator. The magistrate placed himself pompously at the table in the midst; the officer, who had now been joined by two companions with various other articles from the earl's chamber, stood at Master Shortcoat's right hand, to prompt him; and then the servants were called in singly, and asked to whom the clothes belonged which had been found.

"To the gentleman who was killed," replied the man William, who was first examined.

"And whose is the corpse?" demanded the officer of militia.

"I do not know," replied the servant; "they took it away with them."

"Was he killed at once, or did he die here?" asked the officer.

"He lingered a little, I believe," answered William

The justice looked at the officer, and the latter said, "You may go! See him through the hall, Watson."

Another and another servant was called, and all gave the same answers till they came to the maids, who had not been so well or fully instructed by fair Annie Walton as the men had been by her aunt. Their first reply, indeed, was the same, that the gentleman was dead; but when they were interrogated as to the time of his death, they hesitated and stumbled a little; but they were generally girls of good sense, and contrived to get out of the scrape by saying that they did not know, as they had not seen him till he was dead; and all agreed that the corpse had been taken away.

At length, however, at the last, appeared the scullion, and Lady Margaret's face for the first time showed some anxiety, as the girl had not been in the kitchen when she visited it, and, to say truth, had been hearing some sweet words from a soldier in the court. When the usual first question was asked her, namely, whom the clothes belonged to, she replied,

"To the gentleman who was brought in wounded."

"And who died shortly after," said Lady Margaret, fixing her eye upon her.

"Do not venture to prompt her, lady," said the officer, turning sternly towards her. "Speak, girl, did he die? and tell truth."

"I never heard as he died," answered the scullion.

"Do you know where he now is?" asked the justice.

"No, that I don't," replied the girl. "I have not seen him to-day."

Both judge and officer gazed at her with a frowning brow, and demanded, one after the other,

"Did you see him yesterday?"

Poor Annie Walton's heart fluttered as if it would have fain broke through her side; but the girl, after a moment's consideration, replied, somewhat confusedly,

"I don't know as I did."

"Then, when did you see him last?" inquired the militia-man.

"I can't tell," answered the scullion. "I don't justly know: I saw him the night he was brought in, for the men laid him down on the floor there, and I saw him through the door chink just where Basto is lying."

She pointed at the dog as she spoke, and he, with whom she was by no means a favourite, started up with a sharp growl, and rushed towards her. He was checked by his mistress's voice, however; but the girl, uttering a terrified shriek, ran out of the room, and the officers, with the justice, laid their heads together over the table, conversing for some minutes in a low tone.

At length the worshipful magistrate raised his eyes, and, turning to Lady Margaret, he said,

"Madam, it is clear that this is a very dark and mysterious affair; and any one can see with half an eye that you have given shelter and comfort to notorious malignants. It is, therefore, my unpleasant duty to quarter upon you a guard of twenty men, under this worshipful gentleman, who will take what means he may think proper for discovering the dark practices which clearly have occurred here."

"In this dark clear case, sir," replied Lady Margaret, with a stiff and haughty air, "will it not be better to furnish them with a general war-

rant? Its having been pronounced illegal will be no obstacle with those who set all law at defiance. As to quartering these men upon a widow lady, I care little about it, so that I do not see them. Keep them away from the apartments of my family, and you may put them where you like. If they come near me, I will drive them forth with that feather broom. Away with you all; and keep out of my sight, whosoever you bestow yourselves. Or do you intend to spoil the Egyptians, and take my beef and beer, or my goods and chattels?"

"Though you are uncivil to us, lady," said the officer, who perhaps thought that the comfort of his quarters might depend upon fair words, "we do not intend to be uncivil to you. We will give you no trouble so long as you and your people comport yourselves properly; and in the trust that you will do so, I shall now retire and fix the rooms for my men as I shall judge expedient, of course not interfering with your accommodation. Come, Master Shortcoat."

"Stay, sir," said Lady Margaret. "You speak well. Perhaps I was too warm; but all these intrusions into a peaceable household do heat one. I will see that you have all that you want and can desire—I wish to show you no inhospitality;" and she bowed with graceful dignity as the Roundhead party retired.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NIGHT had succeeded to day, and that day had been an uneasy one; for during the hours of light that remained after the Parliamentary militia had taken possession of Langley Hall, Lady Margaret had in vain endeavoured to find some opportunity of opening one of the several doors which led into the private rooms and passages of the house. Wherever she went, she found one or other of the soldiers on the watch, and she became alarmed lest the want of necessary food should, in the earl's weakened state, prove detrimental to his health. Miss Walton said nothing; but her beautiful eyes were so full of anxious thought, that whenever they turned upon her aunt, the good old lady felt her heart ache for the painful apprehensions which she knew were in her fair niece's bosom; and as the shades of evening fell, she rang for her servant William, and asked him several questions in a low tone. What his answers were, neither Annie Walton nor Arrah Neil could hear for some time; but at length, in reply to some injunction of his mistress, he said aloud, "I will try, my lady; but I do not think it will do. He is a sad, sober man, and when they were eating, shortly after they came, he would drink little or nothing."

"Well, give him my message," said Lady Margaret, "and if he will not drink, we must find another means. Warn all the tenants, William, to-morrow early, that they may be wanted; but now go and see the wine be the best in the cellar."

The man retired, but in a few minutes after he opened the door again, announcing Captain Hargood, and the commander of the small force left at the Hall made his appearance with a ceremonious bow.

"Madam," he said, "I hope you do not put yourself to inconvenience or restraint to ask a stranger to your table who is here against your will and in some degree against his own."

"Not in the least, Captain Harwood," answered Lady Margaret: "I always have loved and esteemed brave men, whatever be their party; and though, in all that is justifiable, I would never scruple to oppose to the death an enemy, yet, where we are not antagonists, I would always wish to show courtesy and forget enmity."

"I hope, madam, you will not consider me as an enemy," replied the officer.

"Whoever seizes forcible possession of my fortress," said the old lady, with a smile, "must be so for the time; but let us not speak of unpleasant things; supper must be served," and, advancing unembarrassed, she rested her hand upon the arm of her unwelcome guest, and led the way with him to the hall.

But the stout Roundhead was not one to lose his active watchfulness by indulging in the pleasures of the table. The wine was excellent, and the servants were always ready to fill for him; but he drank sparingly, and Lady Margaret did not venture to press him, lest her purpose should become apparent, and lead to suspicions beyond.

After partaking lightly of the wine, she rose, and with her two fair companions retired, leaving him with the potent beverage still on the board in the hope that he might indulge more freely when he was alone. As soon as they were in the withdrawing-room, she explained to Annie Walton and Arrah Neil, in low but earnest tones, the exact position of the room in which was the entrance to the secret passage which she had opened for Lord Beverley, and the means of making him hear and withdraw the bolt.

"I will send up a basket of food and wine to your chamber, Annie," she said, "and as soon as all seems quiet in the house, you and our dear Arrah go, by the moonlight if you can, to that place, and try to gain admission. If you should fail, or if you should find any one on the watch, come down to me. They have so scattered their men about that it is wellnigh hopeless before they go to sleep. It would almost seem that they knew whereabouts the doors lie. There is one means, indeed, and that must be taken if all others fail; yet I would fain shrink from it."

"What means is that, dear aunt?" asked Annie Walton.

But the old lady replied that it mattered not; and shortly after they separated, and the two fair girls retired to their chamber. Miss Walton's maids were there, ready to aid her in undressing; and though Annie and her friend had much to say to each other, all private conversation was stayed for the time. Shortly after, Lady Margaret's chief woman appeared with a covered basket, set it down, and retired without saying a word; and in a few minutes more, Annie sent her maidens to bed, saying that she would sit up for a while, and adding, "Leave me a lamp on that table."

But, now that they had the opportunity of speaking more freely, Arrah Neil and her noble friend could but poorly take advantage of it, so eager were they to watch for the diminution of all sounds in the hall. They did speak, indeed, words of kindly comfort and support; and manifold dreamy reasonings took place on all the events of the day, and their probable consequences; but still they interrupted their speech continually to listen, till all, at length, seemed profoundly still, and Arrah whispered,

"Now I think we may go."

"Yet but a moment or two, dear Arrah," replied Miss Walton. "Let them be sound asleep."

In deep silence they remained for about a quarter of an hour; but then Annie herself rose and proposed to go.

"I am grown such a coward, Arrah," she said, "that I would fain perform this task speedily, and fain escape it too."

"Tis the desire to do it," answered her fair companion, "that creates the fear of failing. But let me go, Annie, if you dread it so much."

"Nay, nay! No hand but mine, for worlds!" exclaimed the young lady. "But come, I am ready; let us go."

Slowly and quietly opening the door, they issued forth into the passages, and, remembering as well as they could Lady Margaret's direction, were making their way towards the room to which she had led the earl, when suddenly out of a neighbouring chamber walked the officer of militia, and stood confronting them in the midst of the passage. Annie Walton trembled, and caught poor Arrah's arm to stop her; but her fair companion was more self-possessed, and whispering, "Come on; show no fear," she advanced straight towards the officer, saying aloud,

"Will you have the kindness, sir, to accompany us to the door of Lady Margaret's chamber? We are afraid of meeting some of your men, who might be uncivil."

"Do you not think that Lady Margaret may be asleep by this time?" asked the officer, with a doubtful smile.

"Oh dear no!" replied Annie Walton, who had gained courage from her fair companion's presence of mind. "She never goes to bed till one or two. Perhaps we may even find her in the withdrawing-room."

"I think not," said the officer; "but we can easily see." And, thus speaking, he led the way down, having made himself thoroughly acquainted with the ordinary passages of the house.

The door of the usual sitting-room was ajar, a light was within, and the officer put in his head. Instantly perceiving Lady Margaret Langley seated reading, and recollecting her threatened vengeance if any one of his band approached her apartments, he said, "I have escorted the two young ladies hither, madam, as they were afraid to come alone."

"I thank you, sir," replied the old lady, laying down the book. "Down, Basto, down! Come hither, Annie. Close the door, my sweet Arrah. I thank you, sir. Good-night. They are foolish, frightened girls; but I will see them back when we have done our evening duties."

The perfect tranquillity of the old lady's manner removed the suspicion which Captain Harwood certainly had entertained; and, closing the door, he retired to the room he had chosen for himself.

As soon as he was gone, Lady Margaret said, in a low tone, "So you were stopped, I suppose, by that rascal?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Annie Walton; "we had scarce taken twenty paces when he met us—and I was fool enough to lose all judgment, but this dear girl saved us both."

"Well," rejoined Lady Margaret, "there is but one means, then. I am weak, girls! very weak, or I would not have kept the good earl so

long in darkness and in hunger for my own foolish thoughts. Come with me," and, opening the door which led from the right-hand side of the withdrawing-room to her own chamber, she went in, closing it again when they had both passed, and fastening it with a bolt. She then paused for a moment in the midst, gazing down upon the floor with a look of deep sadness, and then approached a large closet, which she opened. It was full of shelves; but, putting her hand upon one of them, Lady Margaret drew it forth, laid it down beside her, and pushed hard against the one below. It instantly receded with the whole back of the closet, showing the entrance to a room beyond.

"See! but say nothing," whispered the old lady; and while Annie Walton followed with the lamp, she entered before them. It was a small room, fitted up somewhat like a chapel, but hung with tapestry. At the farther end was a table, or altar, covered with a linen cloth, yellow with age, and having beneath what Annie Walton imagined to be the chalice and plate of the communion. Above, however, hung the picture of a very young woman, whose sweet and radiant look, yet tender and mournful eyes, might have well accorded with a representation of the blessed Virgin, but the figure was dressed in the fashion of no very remote time; and as soon as Lady Margaret raised her eyes to it, the tears rose in them, and, tottering to one of the large crimson chairs that were ranged along the side, she sank into it, and bent her head in silence.

Annie Walton and Arrah Neil stood and gazed upon the picture as if they were both fascinated, but neither spoke; and at length Lady Margaret rose again, saying abruptly, "I am a fool, and will be so no more. This is the chamber of retribution, my sweet Arrah," she continued, approaching the two fair girls, and taking the lamp out of the hand of Miss Walton. "Here, for many a year, I and one now gone wept and prayed for forgiveness;" and, holding up the lamp towards the picture, she gazed at it with a dark and mournful look. Then laying her hand upon the edge of the cloth which covered the table, she seemed about to withdraw it, but paused, and her face became almost livid with emotion. "I will do it," she said at length, "I will do it: but say nothing—ask no question—utter not a word."

As she spoke, she cast back the cloth; and, lying on the table, which was covered with crimson velvet, appeared a pale and gory human head, severed at the neck. The face was turned up, the eyes closed, the mouth partly open, the fine white teeth shown. Though pale as ashes, the traces of great beauty remained in the fine chiselled features; the curling lip, covered with the dark moustache; the wide, expansive brow, the high forehead, the blue tinge of the eyes, shining through the dark-fringed lids, all showed that, in life, it must have been the face of as handsome a man as ever had been seen; but over all was the gray shade of death.

Annie Walton started back in terror; but Lady Margaret turned to her sternly and sadly, saying, "Foolish girl, it is but wax! For you, it has none of those memories that give it life for me. There, you have seen enough!" and she drew the cloth back again over that sad memento. Then gazing for a moment again at the picture, the old lady set the lamp down upon the table, and casting her arms round the fair neck of Arrah Neil, she leaned her eyes upon her shoulder and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE household of Lady Margaret Langley was increased, during the day following the adventures related in the last two chapters, by the return of two stout servants, whom she had sent upon various errands to a considerable distance from Langley Hall; and in the evening, the steward and his man came back, as they termed it—though, in truth, they both ordinarily lived in a house and cottage about two miles off—to the dwelling of the good lady. The blind, too, arrived, and took up his lodging in the house; and the shrewd servant William was busy among the farmers and tenants, talking with one, whispering with another, winking at a third. Langley Hall, in truth, became quite a gay place; for, in addition to the militiamen from Beverley, every morning saw five or six good yeomen, sometimes eight or nine, attending Lady Margaret's orders and directions about farming matters.

Captain Hargood felt somewhat uneasy; for these visitors, all stout men, and generally armed, became so numerous, that he saw it was not at all unlikely that, in process of time, he might be outnumbered in the Hall. He perceived that, should such be the case, at any unexpected moment he might be easily overpowered, if the disposition which he had at first made of his men continued; for, scattered over that large rambling mansion, in order to watch what was taking place in every part at once, there were not to be found more than two or three of the militia together at any one given point, and it was by no means an easy or rapid process to gather them from their several quarters into one body, for the stairs and passages, the rooms and anterooms, the lobbies and galleries, the halls and corridors were so intricate and in such numbers that it was a good half hour's march from one end of the house to the other, and the shutting of a door or barricading a passage might isolate any one party from the rest in a moment. He could not help fancying, too, that Lady Margaret felt the advantage of her position, and that there was something more than chance in this influx of tenantry; and thus the feeling of security with which he had taken possession of Langley Hall soon disappeared, and he became very uneasy indeed.

In after periods of the civil war, when the bold and decided tone of the Parliament had spread to the whole party, and the simple justice or petty commissioner, knowing that any violence against a malignant would receive countenance and applause from those who had the power of the state in their hands, ventured every excess against their enemies, Captain Hargood would have overcome the difficulty at once by marching off Lady Margaret and the principal members of her household to Beverley or Hull. But the Roundhead party, in remote provinces, had not yet acquired full confidence either in its strength or in its leaders; and steps afterward taken, as a matter of course, were now not even thought of. His only resource, therefore, was to re-enforce his numbers, if possible, and to make such changes in the disposition of his men, in the mean while, as would guard against surprise.

During the hours, then, at which the hall was thronged with the tenants and farmers, he gathered his men together into one part of the house, and there kept them till he found that the visitors who alarmed him were departing. But, in truth,

this was all that Lady Margaret desired; and the unpleasant espiel being removed from about nine in the morning till about one o'clock, ample time was afforded for very easy communication with the Earl of Beverley, both to cheer him by the society of his friends, and supply him with all that might be necessary to his comfort.

As only one of the party could venture to be absent at a time, it may easily be supposed that Annie Walton was the person most frequently fixed upon, as she was the one certainly best fitted to console the weary hours of the earl in the strange sort of captivity to which he was reduced; and many and many a happy hour, during the next four days, did the two lovers spend together.

Of the present they had but little to say. No news reached the hall of any importance, and the brief laugh excited by the success of Lady Margaret's stratagem for driving the militia-men into one particular portion of the house soon passed away. It was upon the past and upon the future, then, that their thoughts and conversation principally turned; but though the mind of Annie Walton certainly rested more often and more anxiously upon the coming years than upon the gone, yet the apprehensions that she entertained regarding them—the too intense interest they excited, and the agitation which the contemplation of all that might take place produced, naturally led her to seek relief in the softened influences of the past; and she would dwell willingly with her lover upon all the thousand little events of early days, showing him, without reserve, all the secrets of her own pure and guileless heart, and seeking playfully, and yet eagerly, to discover those of his.

Nor did he much strive to conceal them, although there were, of course, some things that he would not say; but wherever he saw that she was deeply interested, and that mystery might create doubts injurious to her peace, he was as frank and free as she was, sporting, perhaps, a little with her curiosity, but always satisfying it in the end. He did not, indeed, amuse himself or her, to use the words of a sweet old song that one time cheered my infancy, by

"Tales telling of loves long ago;"

although she was curious to know whether the heart, the possession of which she so much valued, had never been given to any but herself; and, indeed, could hardly believe that, among all the scenes through which he had passed—among the fair and beautiful with whom he had mingled, and in all the varying events in which he had taken a part, some one had not been found to love and be beloved by one whom she felt it difficult to imagine any woman could behold without feeling the same sensations towards him that she experienced herself.

At first, indeed, she did not venture to question, but merely suggested, with playful smiles, the confession which she strove to extort. Then, when he spoke of beautiful scenes in other lands, or of bright and happy moments in former days, she would laugh, and ask whether there had not been some one near to give light to the light, and add sweet to the sweetness; and he would reply sportively, "Oh! a multitude, dear Annie! I can assure you that in those days every woman was fair to my young eyes, and every smiling jest was full of wit."

But when she pressed him closer still, and inquired whether, among the many, there had not

been one brighter than them all, who had found means to eclipse the loveliness around, and make herself the beloved, the earl would draw her closer to him, and gazing on the liss of her downcast eyes, would answer, "Nay, Annie, but I must have your confession first. Have you never loved before? Has no one, ere I knew you, brushed off with a touch the bloom of that dear heart before it was ripe for me?"

"Never, never," she cried; "never, Francis; I have had no one to love. Little as I have seen of the world, few as were those who have frequented our house since I was a mere girl, it was not likely that I should meet with any who should either care to make themselves agreeable to me, or have the power of doing so. I can assure you, that, had it not been for my brother Charles, till I met with you I should have thought men very dull things indeed. We had, it is true, more than once a crowd of roystering Cavaliers, and more frequently still half a dozen prim Puritans staying in the house or in the neighbourhood; but the first were all too gay for me, the others all too sad; the one set too hard of their fine clothes and their fine horses, the others too fond of their own selves, for them to care for me or I to care for them. One man, indeed, asked my father for my hand when I was a girl of fifteen, but my father saved me the trouble of saying no by valuing me at too high a price to part with me. But with you, Francis, it is very different: you have mingled with the bright dames of France and the beautiful ones of Italy and Spain, and I cannot even hope that you should have escaped heart-whole, to lay your first affections at the feet of poor Annie Walton, a country girl wellnigh ignorant of courts and all the graces that you must have seen elsewhere."

"I have seen none like her, Annie," said Lord Beverley, in a tone of deep earnestness, "and I will tell you, in truth and sincerity, I never loved till I did see her. I may have admired, I may have been pleased, but there have been things in my fate and history which came dim between me and all others, like those glasses which star-gazers use to look upon the sun without having their eyes dazzled; and even, dearest Annie, when that thick veil was over me the most, I was still the gayest, jesting with the light, laughing with the gay, and draining the bowl of pleasure to the dregs, even when the draught was most tasteless to my lips."

"Indeed!" said Annie Walton, gravely; "that seems strange to me."

"And yet it is true," replied the earl: "nay, more, it is common, Annie. Each man has his own secrets in his heart, and each his own way of hiding them: one in a dark, gloomy pall, one in a gay and glittering veil; and the latter was my case, sweet one. But perchance you have never heard the tale of what happened to my house in older times. My mother's brother was an Irish lord of a high and noble nature, wild, daring, and somewhat rash. For some poor and trifling fault he was pursued, unjustly, I believe—at all events, with unjust severity—in courts he did not recognise, to the confiscation of his property. He laughed such laws to scorn, however, defied them to take him from his mountain holds, and added attainure to the judgment against him; but he had strong enemies even in his native country. Troops were led up through passes that he thought secure by men who knew them but too well. His castle—for it was a house well fortified—was attacked and stormed,

he being absent from it at the time; and my poor sister, a young child I loved most dearly, then but waiting for an opportunity of returning to her own home, perished in the flames, for they burned his dwelling to the ground. He himself was taken on his return, and with indignant haste and many illegal circumstances was condemned and executed."

"Good heaven!" cried Annie Walton, a wild fancy suddenly presenting itself to her mind, "can it be that Arrah Neil is your sister? There are several strange things regarding her, and I may tell you she is not what she seems."

"No," answered Lord Beverley, "oh no, my beloved, that could not be. My sister would now be seven or eight years older than poor Arrah, and, besides, the body was not so disfigured that it could not be recognised. She died beyond all doubt. In grief and indignation my father and my mother appealed to the King of England, strove to remove my uncle's trial to some more fit and competent tribunal before his sentence was pronounced, showed the evident illegality of many of the proceedings against him, petitioned, prayed in vain. He died as I have said, and then to remonstrances they added complaints and reproaches, withdrew from the court, and uttered words which were construed into high offences; fines and punishments followed upon those whose hands had aided to uphold the monarchy, and in bitter disgust at man's ingratitude, in abhorrence of his falsehood, and indignation at his injustice, I quitted England, wandering over many distant lands, and resolving never to return. I sought forgetfulness, Annie—I sought pleasure, amusement, anything which, if it could not take the thorn out of my heart, might at least assuage the pain—But hark! there is the signal that you must return;" and with one brief caress they parted.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ANNIE WALTON, on her return to Lady Margaret's sitting-room, accompanied by Arrah Neil, who had given the signal agreed upon as a notification that longer stay would be dangerous, found her good aunt seated with her head leaning on her hand, listening to some intelligence brought by her faithful servant William, who stood before her, with his usual well-satisfied and shrewd look, detailing a valuable discovery which he had just made.

"It is indeed so, my lady," he said; "they have corrupted her, there can be no doubt. Give me a Puritan for ploughing with the heifer. I saw the fellow Jones and the girl, with their two heads close together, in the court, and as I was close to the casement, and the casement was open, I drew up against the wall, saying to myself, traitors make eavesdroppers."

"What did they say? what did they say?" demanded Lady Margaret. "We must come to a quick decision, William."

"Why, all I heard, my lady, was, that the trullion said to the Roundhead, 'It is quite sure, for I saw her go in myself; and when she had been there for two or three minutes, I walked in too, just as if I was going to look for something. There's no other way out of the room to be seen, and yet she was not there.' She didn't come out for an hour either, for I watched." Then the man answered "Well, we must wait till to-mor-

row, when the re-enforcements are coming up from Beverley. We shall be enough then to overpower all resistance."

"Said he so? said he so?" cried Lady Margaret, with a thoughtful air. "We must contrive means to frustrate them. Quick, William," she continued, after a moment's meditation, "go and keep the people here. Tell the farmers I will give them a supper; and if you can, contrive to get more to come up. Then let some one go out and gather news in the country; see what's the truth of this report that came last night, of troops marching, and who they are."

The man hastened away to obey her orders, and Miss Walton gazed anxiously in her aunt's face, inquiring,

"Do you think they have discovered him?" "They have discovered something, Annie, that is clear," replied Lady Margaret, "and enough to lead them to more; but they shall not have him, notwithstanding, even if we should fight for it. I know the house better than they do, and could lead them into many a pretty trap if I liked it. We can get fifteen or sixteen men together—and then they are but twenty. Then there's Basto, he's worth three Roundheads at any time—though he's but an old dog—and all the women besides. Why, you would fight for this good earl, wouldn't you, Annie, my love? else you are not fit for a soldier's bride. On my life, I should like to see you in a pair of jack-boots;" and the old lady laughed gayly enough, to cheer her fair niece, whose heart was more easily alarmed than her own.

"Could he not escape in the night, dear Lady Margaret?" said Arrah Neil; "I went to walk out by the moonlight last night, and no one noticed me."

"Because you are a woman, dear child," answered Lady Margaret. "He must have a horse, too; for, though his wound is well enough now, he could not walk far. However, it must be thought of, if other things should fail. But we must go and hold counsel with this good lord. Well, William, what more?"

"Why only, my lady, I have been asking Farmer Heatcote about the troops moving, and he says he is sure of it; he saw the men himself. They seem to be Cavaliers too, and a good troop of them; but that was yesterday evening, and they were then ten miles off."

"That's unfortunate," replied his lady; "for if we could have given them notice, we might have had help, and it would have been some satisfaction to enclose these rat-catchers in their own trap. However, you go now and watch Madam Maud for the next two hours; never take your eye off her, and be sure she does not come in this part of the house. You two girls stay here; I will be back presently;" and, thus saying, she retired to her own chamber, sought the private passage into the apartments where the earl was concealed, and passing with a grave look through that which she called the chamber of atonement, threaded a long and narrow corridor constructed in the wall of the building, and mounted a staircase of no greater width, which led to the sleeping-room of Lord Beverley, where she found him reading one of the books with which she had taken care to supply him.

"Well, my dear lord," she said, "they have found us out, I fear."

"Indeed! Lady Margaret?" replied the earl, calmly; "then I suppose the sooner I quit my present quarters the better."

"I don't think so, my lord," rejoined the old lady; "I am not sure that it will not be wise to have a struggle for it, and that very speedily. We have got fifteen stout men in the house, and you make sixteen. They with their captain are twenty-one. I have a good store of arms here too, and I could bring the people round, or part of them, through these passages, to fall upon them in the rear, while the others attacked them in front."

"No, no, my dear lady," replied the earl, smiling, "that must not be done on any account. In the first place, we might lose the day, and then you and yours, and all that is most dear to me on earth, would be exposed to violence, of which I dare not think. The fire of musketry, too, in such a house as this, might lead to terrible disasters; and besides, whatever were the result, unless Hull fall and the king can hold this part of Yorkshire, you would be obliged to fly from your own dwelling and give it up as a prey to the Parliamentary soldiery. It must not be thought of. If you can but keep these men from pushing their discoveries farther till nightfall, and get me out by the most private way, I will go and take my chance alone. It is the only course, depend upon it."

"Oh, we will keep them at bay," replied Lady Margaret. "They have been quaking for their lives the last three days, and while my stout yeomen remain in the house, dare not stir one from another for fear of being taken unawares. I have ordered my men to remain all day, and have promised them a supper at nightfall: so we are secure till then, and in the mean while you may rest safe, for sooner than they should break in here, I will even burn the house about their ears. If you are resolved to go—"

"Quite," replied the earl.

"Then I will despatch one of the young men," replied Lady Margaret, "as if he were going home, to have a horse ready for you on the road to York. He can come back again to help us when it is done. In the mean while I will send you food and wine, that you may be strong for your ride; but I must tell you that there is a party of horse out about Market Weighton, said to be Cavaliers, and it were well that you should be upon your guard if you fly that way, lest they should prove daws in peacocks' feathers."

"Nay, that cannot well be," replied the earl. "If I be not much mistaken, the news I sent by Walton will soon bring the king before the gates of Hull. It would not surprise me if these were some of his majesty's own parties, and I will direct my steps towards them with all speed."

Some farther conversation took place regarding the arrangements to be made, and it was agreed that, as soon as Lady Margaret thought the earl's escape might be attempted with a probability of success, either she herself, or one of her fair companions, should visit him and give him notice; and after all had been thus settled, Lady Margaret, taking her leave of him, returned to the room where she had left her niece and Arrah Neil.

She found them speaking eagerly, poor Arrah's colour somewhat heightened, and Annie Walton's eye bent down, with a dewy drop resting on the lid.

"Nay, but tell my aunt," said Miss Walton. "Indeed, dear Arrah, you should tell her."

"No," replied Arrah Neil, with her own wild eagerness, "I will tell no one;" and then turn-

ing to Lady Margaret, she laid her hand upon her arm, gazing with an appealing look in her face, and saying, "I have a scheme, dear lady, a scheme which Annie opposes; but it is a good scheme too; and she only fears it on account of danger to myself. Now I fear no danger in a good cause; and I am sure you will trust me, will you not, dear Lady Margaret?"

"That I will, my child," replied Lady Margaret Langley, "and ask no questions either."

"Nay, but hear," cried Annie Walton; "she is always ready to sacrifice herself for others, and if she does not tell you, I will, my dear aunt."

"Nay, nay," replied Lady Margaret, "you will not betray counsel, Annie, I am sure. Let her have her own way. It is right, I will answer for it; and if it be too generous for men, God will repay it. I will trust her."

Annie Walton shook her head, but the conversation dropped there, and the good old lady proceeded to make all her preparations for the execution of her scheme.

The hours went by, the yeomen still remained at the hall. Captain Hargood continued to act upon the plan which he had previously followed, but showed no slight symptoms of uneasiness at the prolonged occupation of the house by Lady Margaret's tenantry, appearing from time to time with an indifferent and samtering air, which ill concealed no small degree of apprehension at all that he remarked, and retreating speedily to his men again, without venturing to suffer them to separate for a moment.

The hour of supper came on, and the table in the hall was crowded; Lady Margaret appeared for a moment, and bade her guests make merry; but two of her servants were stationed in the vestibule beyond, which communicated with the stairs and passages that led to the part of the house in possession of the militia, and whenever a step was heard above, one of them approached the foot of the staircase and listened, to ensure against surprise.

Night fell, and as soon as it was completely dark, Annie Walton accompanied her aunt to the good dame's own chamber, and while Lady Margaret herself remained there, proceeded with a lamp through the dark passages in the wall, to give her lover the warning agreed upon.

They might be pardoned if they lingered a moment or two together; but at length descending with a quiet step, they approached the chamber where Lady Margaret waited. As soon as the door opened, the old lady held up her finger, saying, "Hush! I heard a noise just now; but I think it is merely those clowns in the hail, raising over their liquor. Let us listen, however."

They paused for a minute or two, but all was quite still.

"It is quiet now," said the earl. "We should hear if any one was in your sitting-room, and I am to go out into the fields by that way, you say."

"Yes, it is all quiet now," said Lady Margaret; and, advancing to the door which led to the withdrawing-room, she opened it quietly but quickly, followed close by the earl and Annie Walton. No sooner was it open, however, than Lady Margaret stopped with a start, and Annie Walton, with a low cry, clung to her lover's arm, for the room before them was full of soldiery.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Hargood, with a dry, mocking laugh; "so the dead have come to life again! Stand, sir, and give an account of yourself. Lady, you are a mighty skilful plotter, but we have doubled upon you, and I will not quit this house till I find this bird's nest."

"Run round, Annie," whispered Lady Margaret to her niece, "through the secret chamber, by the passage to the left and the door in the wall, where you will see a bolt. It will lead you to the hall. Bring our men upon them from behind; we will fight for it still."

Miss Walton took a step to obey, but the movement was not unperceived by the captain of the militia, who exclaimed in a loud voice, turning his head slightly towards his men, "Cover them with your guns. Whoever stirs a step, I order them to fire!" he added, addressing the party at the entrance of the room. But the stout-hearted old lady was not to be daunted, and motioning the earl back, she suddenly shut to the door, turned the key, and stepped behind the shelter of the wall, drawing Annie with her. There was a momentary pause, to hear if Captain Hargood would keep his word, but not a gun was fired, and Lady Margaret reiterated her desire that Annie would run round and bring her tenantry from the hall into the rear of the Roundheads.

"But no," she cried, interrupting herself; "come with me, Annie. Come with me, my lord. They must be some time breaking in."

"It is useless, I fear, dear lady," said the earl. "They have better information than we imagine, and I think have been re-enforced. There seem to me to be more than twenty men, so that most probably your people are disarmed."

"Hark!" cried Annie Walton; "there is a trumpet without! Oh! they have many more with them, depend upon it."

"A trumpet," cried Lady Margaret, listening, and her withered face assuming a look of joy as she heard the long, shrill blast ringing upon the air. "So there is, so there is! Cavaliers, to the rescue! This is our dear Arrab's doing. These are king's troops, my lord. No Roundhead Puritan ever blew a blast like that."

"On my life, I believe it is true," cried the earl, approaching the window and looking out. "A party have crossed the stream, and are coming over the meadows."

As he spoke, there was a loud murmuring in the neighbouring chamber, and then the sound of a blow, as if from an axe, upon the door of the room in which they were. The earl instantly threw open the casement and vaulted out, and the next moment his voice was heard calling loudly, "Hither! hither!" At the same time, however, the blows upon the door were repeated, and though made of strong, solid oak, it crashed, and one panel gave way.

"Quick, Annie," cried Lady Margaret; "let us through the other door. We can set them at defiance yet;" but, just as they reached it, a still heavier blow of the axe dashed the lock from its fastenings, and the broken door flew back. At the same moment, however, a man sprang into the open window. It was the Earl of Beverley; but another and another followed. The casement on the right, too, was burst open, and two or three leaped in at a time, casting themselves in the way of the advancing militia-men.

"Down with your arms, traitors!" cried a

voice that Miss Walton thought she remembered.

"Back, Annie—back, my beloved! Away, Lady Margaret; keep out of the fire," exclaimed the earl; and, drawing her niece with her, the old lady retired into what she called the chamber of atonement, pushing the door nearly to but not quite.

The next instant a musket was discharged; then came volley after volley; then the clash of swords, and the cries, and shouts, and words of command, with every now and then a deadly groan between, while through the chink of the door that was left open crept the pale blue smoke, and rolled round with a sulphurous smell, and the blast of the trumpet echoed from without as if calling up fresh spirits to the fray. Lady Margaret Langley held her niece's hand firmly in hers, while Annie Walton bent her fair brow upon her old relative's shoulder, and struggled with the tears that would fain have burst forth.

The struggle seemed to last an age, though, in truth, its duration was but a few minutes, and then came a pause, not of absolute silence, for the sounds were still various and many, but there was a comparative stillness, and a voice was heard speaking, though the words were indistinct. The moment after some one near exclaimed, "Lay down your arms, then, traitors. We will grant no conditions to rebels with arms in their hands. Hie to Major Randal, Barcobi. Tell him to guard well every door, that no one escape. Now, sir, do you surrender?"

Annie Walton recognised her brother's voice, and murmured, "He, at least, is safe."

"We will surrender upon quarter, sir," answered the voice of Captain Hargood.

"You shall surrender at discretion, or die where you stand," answered Lord Walton. "Make your choice quickly, or we fire!"

Almost as he spoke there came a dull clang, as of arms grounded suddenly on the wooden floor, and, greatly to the relief of poor Annie Walton's heart, the voice of Lord Beverley was heard exclaiming, "Treat them gently, treat them gently! They are prisoners, and must abide his majesty's pleasure."

"Thank God!" said Miss Walton, "thank God!"

"Hush!" said Lady Margaret. "Let us look out, Annie. There is a smell of burning wood."

As she spoke, she approached the door and opened it. Annie Walton followed close upon her steps, and gazed into the room beyond. It was a sad and fearful scene. The bedchamber of Lady Margaret, in which the principal struggle had taken place, was comparatively dark, receiving its only light from the glare of the lamp and sconces in the drawing-room on the other side. The room was wellnigh filled with men, and others were seen through the open door, and every sort of attitude into which the human figure can be thrown was to be seen among them. At the farther side of the chamber appeared Captain Hargood and some eight or nine of the militia, with their arms cast down, and gloomy, sullen dependency upon their faces. Near them lay three or four others, still and motionless. One fallen upon his back with his arms extended, one upon his face with his limbs doubled up beneath him. A little more in advance was another militia-man, sitting on the ground, supporting himself with one hand upon a chair, while the other was pressed tight upon

his side, and beside Lady Margaret's bed knelt a young Cavalier with his long and fair hair streaming down his shoulders, and his face buried in the bedclothes. Several of the Royalist party were stretched upon the ground near; the faces and hands of most of the others were bloody and grimed with gunpowder, and several were seen in different parts of the room tying up the wounded limb or stanching the flowing blood. In the front stood Lord Walton and the Earl of Beverley, the one armed, and with the stern frown of vehement excitement on his lofty brow; the other with no arms but a sword, and with his fine and speaking countenance animated certainly, but calm and open. Hanging in a thick cloud over the whole were wreaths of sulphurous smoke, and a stream of a lighter colour was finding its way in through the open door and slowly mingling with that which the discharge of fire-arms had produced.

The party of the Cavaliers was far the most numerous, and several of them were advancing at the moment when Lady Margaret looked in, to secure the prisoners. Lord Walton was in the act of giving various orders, from which it was apparent that the house was surrounded by a considerable party of the Royalist cavalry; but no one seemed to notice, in the interest of the scene before them, the fact that there was, as Lady Margaret had observed, a strong and growing smell of burning wood, or that ever and anon across the smoke which was finding its way in from the next room came a fitful flash, unlike the quiet and steady light of the candles.

For a moment even Lady Margaret's attention was withdrawn from what she had remarked, to the striking scene before her; but, after a moment's pause, she exclaimed, "Charles, Charles, there is something on fire in the drawing-room!"

Lord Walton started and turned round, gave a smile to Annie and his aunt, and then seeming to catch the meaning of her words, directed a look towards the door, and instantly strode forward, passing Captain Hargood and the prisoners, and entering the drawing-room.

The moment that he had passed the door, his voice was heard exclaiming aloud, "Here, Wilson, Harley! Help here. The place is on fire;" and a general rush was made towards the other room, where it was found that some spark or piece of lighted wadding having fallen upon the hangings, had set the whole in a flame, which, communicating itself to the old dry panelling and carved cornices, was running round the chamber on every side.

Every exertion was now made to extinguish the fire. Some of the soldiers were sent, under Lady Margaret's directions, to get buckets from the hall, where they found the tenantry and servants, who had been locked in by the militia, and secured under a guard. All efforts, however, proved in vain. The flames spread from room to room; but little water was to be procured, except from the stream, and Lord Walton and the earl soon turned their attention to save the valuable furniture, pictures, and plate. The scene of confusion that ensued is indescribable, and, indeed, to the mind of Annie Walton herself it all seemed more like a dream than a reality, till she found herself standing in the garden of the house with her hand clasped in that of Arrah Neil, and old Major Randal saying a few words of somewhat dry, but kindly compliment; while Lady Margaret at her side patted

And Anne and her two dogs, Basso, murmuring, "Let

it burn, boy; let it burn. It has lasted its time, and seen many a heartache; so let it burn, let the villains have not had their way, and the right has triumphed."

To Annie Walton, however, it was a sad sight. Twice within a few months had she seen the place where she had made her home a prey to the flames; and though she was not one to give way to idle superstitions, it seemed as if it were a warning that she was no more to have a fire abode, and she said to herself with a sigh, "Well, I will follow Charles wherever fortune leads him. Peace and repose, security and comfort, are gone from the land, and I must share the troubles of the rest."

A little in advance of the spot where she stood, guarded by two of the soldiers of the troop, was a large pile of plate and a number of other valuable articles, and as Miss Walton was thus thinking, her brother approached Lady Margaret at a rapid pace from the house, saying, "My dear aunt, I fear it is impossible to save any part of the building. Where shall we send these things for safety?"

"Let the house burn, my boy; let the house burn," said Lady Margaret. "It is not worth the hair of an honest man's head to save it. Take the pictures and all the rest of the things but the plate down to the steward's, and especially the papers. As to the silver, we will carry it away to the king at York. He may need it more than I shall."

"He is not at York, my dear aunt," replied Lord Walton. "Ere noon to-morrow I trust he will be in Hull. Luckily, we were on our march, and not very far distant from the hall, when our dear Arrah here found us out, and told us of the stratagem in which you were placed." As he spoke, he took Arrah Neil's fair hand, and pressed his lips upon it warmly, and Lady Margaret, suddenly laying her hand upon his arm, exclaimed, "Ah! Charles, when I am dead, you must be her protector."

"I will," replied Lord Walton; and then added, still more earnestly, "I will."

Arrah Neil gazed steadfastly in his face, and her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It is quite abominable to have left Diggory Falgate for such a length of time in a cold, damp vault, without anybody to keep him company but rats and mice, and such small deer; but yet, dearly beloved reader, it could not be helped without evident injustice to more important personages. Not that Diggory Falgate was an unimportant person, nor that his stay in the vault was unimportant to this history; far from it, as you shall speedily hear. The reader has already perceived that he was a man of action; fond of an enterprise, liking a certain portion of excitement, not always, indeed, quite confident of himself, and, consequently, exaggerating a little his sayings and doings, in order to keep himself to the mark. He drew back the shade of the lantern, then, as we have before said in the end of the thirtieth chapter of this veracious history, and looked about. His next step was not quite determined, and it was wise to look about him. It always is wise, indeed, to look about one before one acts, but, nevertheless, the chance that Diggory gave around him did not serve

to strengthen him in any resolution or guide him in any course of action. On the contrary, it confused his mind and shook his firmness. The first feeling when Mr. Dry and the sexton made their escape from his pursuit, taking him to be a ghostly enemy, was of triumph; but when he came to examine in what that triumph consisted, he felt inclined to exclaim, like Napoleon, "Is this a victory?"

He was master of the field, it is true; the foe had fled; but there he was left alone, with nothing but coffins, and shrouds, and mouldering remnants of humanity scattered round him. The door, too, was bolted; he had heard them fasten it; the other door they had talked of might be locked; and he might have to remain where he was till some person in the neighbourhood chose to die and be buried, or till hunger, fright, cold, and solitude added his bones to those that were mouldering around. He calculated the chances; he entered into the details with painful minuteness; he knew that the parish was large, but very thinly peopled. There might be a funeral once a quarter, but not more, except when some epidemic raged in Hull, and people took a fancy for country lodgings before or after death. Then he thought, with a glimpse of hope, that on Sunday there would be a congregation in the church, and he would make them hear; but Sunday was a long way off, for this was only Wednesday; and Digory Falgate set himself to compute how long he could hold out; Thursday, Friday, Saturday—three days and a half. He had often fasted too, for very good reasons; but then it was not in a vault; it was not among dead corpses. It was under the free sky, with the fresh breath of heaven blowing on his cheek, and beautiful nature refreshing him with bright sights. The case was very different; and his knees began to shake at the very thought.

Then, however, he did what he should have done at first, but that imagination, when she gets the bit between her teeth, is such a runaway jade that she carries one through all the ponds and quagmires of possibility in five minutes. He set out in search of the other door, to see whether there was any need of alarming himself at all. He took two steps forward, and then a third; the fourth struck against something that made a sort of creaking sound—something softer than the scull even of a man of fashion; and holding down the lantern, he perceived the basket of Ezekiel Dry. His heart was instantly revived, and stooping down, he drew forth the bottle of genuine Nantes, which the worthy Puritan had boasted of, and with a good conscience he put it to his mouth. The contents had certainly been diminished by the original proprietor and his friend, but still there was nearly half a bottle left, and that, he thought, with prudence and economy, would serve to keep him up until he could get help. There was some bread and cheese, too, in the basket, and the mouthful of spirits having acted speedily with cheering effect, he looked upon himself as provided against the worst contingency, and in a moment after his eye lighted on a crow, a mallet, and a chisel, with which he flattered himself he would unbar any door that ever yet was closed.

All Digory Falgate's speculations, however, were vain, useless, unnecessary, as nine out of ten of all our speculations are. When he walked on threading the lanes of coffins till he reached a part of the vault where it was crossed by another under the chancel, there, on his right hand, stood

the door that led into the churchyard, wide open, with the moonlight shining in quite pleasantly. All his alarm took flight in a moment; the lion returned to his heart, and after a few moments' pause he said to himself, "Hang me if I do not see, before I go, what these fellows were hunting after;" and with this doughty resolution he walked back, and began to examine the scene of Mr. Dry's operations.

There stood the coffin on the ground, with the lid raised by tearing the screws out of the woodwork, and only holding one at the end, where the feet were placed. It was a very plain coffin; no velvet, no gilding spoke it to be that which contained the dust of high estate or noble birth; but simple black cloth was the covering, and a small lackered plate upon the lid bore inscribed some letters, which the painter held the lantern to decipher. It was not without difficulty that he did so, and then could make nothing of them, for they were but

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The painter paused and gazed in silence. "There must be something more under this," he said at length, "or that old villain would not come here to break open the coffin. I wish Captain Barecolt had told me more, for I cannot help thinking that he and that pretty young lady have some interest in this affair. I have a great mind to see what is in the inside. There is but one screw left in. It would be easily taken out." He stooped and took up the chisel; but then paused again in doubt and hesitation. "Well," he said, "I can put it in again if I find anything. There is no harm in looking;" and quietly applying the chisel to the purposes of a turnscrew, without venturing to use any such violence as those who preceded him had displayed, he drew out the last remaining screw, and then looked with an anxious face at the coffin lid with some feelings of awe and reluctance. Then giving a glance round the vault, he removed the covering, and laid it down against the neighbouring pile. Lifting the lantern, Falgate looked in to the last receptacle of what had once been young, and fresh, and beautiful. There was the dusty shroud, somewhat mouldy, but not decayed, and as the face of the dead was covered with a cloth, none of the ghastly appearances of corruption were visible. But the falling of the drapery of death, the sharp lines and angles that the folds presented, told plainly and solemnly that the flesh had long returned to dust, and that nothing but the bones remained uncrumbled. One thing, however, instantly attracted the poor painter's attention; a piece of parchment covered with writing lay upon the breast; and taking it up, he read it with care. The words seemed to direct him to a further search, and, putting his hand to the left side of the shroud, though with some apparent unwillingness, he drew forth a small packet folded up and sealed. Blowing away the dust from it, after a few minutes' consideration he wrapped it in the parchment, and put it in his pocket, saying, "If I do not take it, others will, who will make a bad use of it. I will convey it to those who have a right to have it, if God helps me out of this scrape." Then replacing the lid of the coffin nearly as he had found it, he ate some of the bread and cheese, applied again to the bottle of Nantes, and walking to the door, peeped out into the churchyard. All was still and quiet,

the moon shining upon the gravestones, and the wind whispering through the old yews; and stripping off the surplice which he had found in the vestry, Diggorry Faigate stole forth into the open air, got over the low wall, and made speed towards some trees that he saw at a distance.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The small town of Beverley was as full as it could hold. It does not, indeed, seem at any time well calculated to hold a great many, but it is wonderful how elastic towns, and even houses are, when the inhabitants have a good mind to make room for others. It was, or seemed to be, as full as it could hold, however, as I have said, when about noon a body of about three hundred horse, followed at the distance of a quarter of a mile by a mixed troop of gentlemen and ladies, with a small party escorting some thirty-five or forty prisoners, entered the place and marched up the principal street. A number of gay Cavaliers were lounging about at the doors of inns and private houses; some companies of train-bands were seen in the more open spaces, and guards appeared at the doors of the town-house, from the windows of which several heads were leaning forth gazing listlessly upon the scene below. All was gay and pleasant confusion; for the party of the Parliament took care to keep out of sight; and the Royalists, exulting in the arrival of the king, were doing their best to show a hearty welcome to his court. Though somewhat less than two thousand cavalry and a small infantry force, consisting entirely of train-bands, with half a dozen light pieces of cannon, certainly did not show much like an army, yet hope and excitement magnified the numbers, and the good townsmen of Beverley, as they reckoned up more noblemen than they had ever seen in the parish before, and calculated the troop which each would bring into the field if he were willing, with the exaggerating power of imagination, never doubted that, if the king had been so pleased, he might have brought a much larger host to the siege of Hull, and believed that many more would actually follow.

In this supposition, indeed, they were encouraged by a number of houses being already marked out as quarters for different persons who had not yet appeared, and among the rest, a handsome brick building in a garden on the side of Hull had been assigned to the expected party of Lord Walton; and as soon as the head of the troop I have mentioned appeared, a man who had been waiting by the side of a saddled horse at the door of the town-house, sprang into the saddle, and riding up to the commanding officer—our old friend Major Randal—informed him of the direction he was to take.

The old officer halted his men to let the party behind come up, and two or three gentlemen on foot advanced and spoke with him for a moment or two, while such exclamations as "Indeed! burned to the ground do you say? What? Langley Hall burned down! I saw a light over that way as I was marching. About nine, was it not?" were heard as they conversed.

"Pooh!" cried Randal, as one of the gentlemen, for want of other amusement, asked him to describe all that had taken place. "I am not good at telling long stories, my lord. Ask Bate-colt there; he has always one ready; and if not,

he will make one. But here come Lord Walton and the Earl of Beverley with the ladies from the Hall, and we must go on. March!"

The troop followed, and on the whole party went to the quarters which had been provided for them, the soldiery billeted in certain almshouses and colleges in the vicinity, and the higher personages in the house which has been mentioned.

The bustle of arrival was soon over; all orders were given, all arrangements made, and the ladies and gentlemen in whom we are most interested were assembled in the hall of the house, a large and handsome room, lined with dark carved oak, and possessing four windows, which looked out into a garden well arranged according to the taste of that day, and surrounded by high walls.

In the march from Langley Hall, as may be supposed, much had been told to Lord Walton; but it had been confined to the events that had taken place since his departure from York; and there was another subject upon which he was anxious for information. As he stood talking with Lady Margaret, while the Earl of Beverley and Miss Walton gazed forth from one of the windows, the young nobleman's eye fixed upon Arrah Neil, who, seated in a chair at some distance, with her look full of deep but tranquil thought, was caressing the large dog which, from her very first arrival at Langley Hall, had shown so strange a partiality for her.

"Tell me, my dear aunt," said Lord Walton, interrupting what the good lady was saying in respect to a proposed visit to the king, "tell me, what is all this about that sweet girl? Annie says she has a strange tale to relate. Has anything more been heard since I went to York?"

"Nothing, Charles, nothing," replied Lady Margaret. "A strange tale did Annie say! I have heard nothing of it, and yet I cannot cast from my mind the belief that, if that poor dog could speak, he would tell us as strange a tale as one could wish to hear. Oh! those dumb witnesses of all the many acts done, as we think, in secrecy and solitude, if they had but a voice, what dark and fearful things would be trumpeted to the ear! 'Tis as well that they have not. But let us go and ask her," and walking up to Arrah, who looked up at her approach, she laid her hand kindly on her shoulder, saying, "Annie has told Charles, dear child, that you have something strange to relate to him. You had better speak to him soon, my Arrah, for no one can count upon those soldiers for a minute. They go hither and thither like the winds and clouds."

The blood mounted slightly into the cheek of Arrah Neil, and she said, after a slight hesitation, "I must tell him alone, dear Lady Margaret. I would fain tell you too, because I know you would advise and help me well; but they made me promise that I would only tell him and Annie."

"Nay, my child, I seek not to know," replied Lady Margaret. "I have had too many sad secrets in my life, and seek for no more; and yet, Arrah, and yet" she added, "there might be a tale for you to tell—but it is a dream—a wild, idle dream. No more of it! Go with him into the gardens, my child, and tell him what you have to say."

Arrah Neil rose timidly, and raised her eyes to Lord Walton's face as he stood beside his aunt; but grave and somewhat stern as he sometimes seemed to others to her he was always

gentleness itself; and, taking her hand, he drew her arm through his, and led her towards the gardens.

Lady Margaret seated herself where Arrah had been sitting, and, bending down her head over the dog, continued talking to him in a low murmuring voice for some minutes. Annie Walton and the Earl of Beverley remained conversing in the window, and their eyes soon rested upon Lord Walton and Arrah Neil as they walked up and down one of the broad gravel walks. The face of the young nobleman was grave and attentive; but from time to time he raised his eyes to his fair companion's countenance, and seemed to ask some question. Arrah Neil's look was most frequently bent upon the ground, but from time to time during their conference she glanced for a single instant eagerly at the face of Charles Walton, as if seeking to discover what impression her story made upon him, and then, with downcast gaze, again went on with her tale. Annie Walton felt for her; for there was something in her heart that made her sure the telling of that tale to the ear that heard it would be matter of no light emotion to poor Arrah Neil. She would have given worlds to see her brother smile, to know that he spoke gentle words and kind encouragement; but he turned up and down the walk again and again with the same thoughtful air, the same high and lofty bearing, not proud, not harsh, but grave and calm. And yet it was better as it was, for Arrah Neil knew him well and loved him dearly as he was; and any deviation from his natural character, any softer, any tenderer movement might have agitated her, and rendered her unable to go on with tranquil clearness. At length, however, when it seemed all at end, the story told as far as she could tell it, the whole truth known as far as she knew it herself, Lord Walton suddenly paused, and, casting his arms round her who had been the object of his house's bounty, pressed a warm kiss upon her glowing cheek. Then pressing her hand in his, he drew it within his arm again, and led her back towards the house with her face crimson and her limbs trembling with deep emotion.

The Earl of Beverley turned to Annie Walton with a smile. "God's blessing on them!" he said, "and on all hearts that love."

Miss Walton started. "You do not understand it, Francis," she replied.

"Yes, dear one, I do," replied her lover; "I have seen it long. I know Charles Walton, and the share that generous enthusiasm and calm, reasoning prudence have each in his nature. He has loved rashly and checked his love. Some great obstacle is gone, and love has now the sceptre. He is not a man to debase that which he loves, or I should have feared for poor Arrah Neil; but he is not one either to sacrifice what he thinks right even to his heart's dearest affections; and therefore, dear Annie, I have grieved for him. But, my beloved," he added, speaking even lower than before, "between us there is no such barrier as has always seemed to exist between them; a period of repose must soon come, and then surely—"

Annie Walton cast down her eyes, and the colour mounted in her cheek; but ere the earl's sentence was concluded, Lord Walton and his fair companion returned, and she turned towards them without reply. Her lover gently detained her, however, gazing in her face half reproachfully, and she murmured in a low tone, "I am always ready to fulfil my promises."

"Thanks, dear one, thanks," answered the earl; and turning to Lady Margaret, he released her hand, seeing that her brother beckoned her towards him.

"You know all she tells me, Annie," said Charles Walton, as his sister joined him and Arrah at the other side of the room; "but this must be kept secret for the present. We must have the farther proofs ere we say aught to any one."

"Even to my aunt?" asked his sister.

"Ay, to her more than all," answered Lord Walton; "but I will soon find means to clear up the whole. This man O'Donnell must be seen if possible; but here comes a messenger from his majesty; I trust we shall soon be in Hull, and then we shall have ample means of obtaining all the information that may be required."

The royal officer, as Lord Walton expected, brought him and the Earl of Beverley a summons to the presence of the king, to whom their arrival in the town had been immediately notified; and hastening to the town-house, they found the unhappy monarch surrounded by the nobility, who were now crowding to his standard. The scene was very different now from that presented by the court at Nottingham. Hope and expectation were in all faces, and even the melancholy countenance of Charles bore the look of satisfaction it so seldom assumed. The audience of the two noblemen was long, and to Lord Beverley in particular the king addressed numerous questions, making him repeat over and over again the substance of his conversations with Sir John Hotham, and pondering over his replies as if seeking to confirm in his own breast the hopes he feared to entertain. At length, however, the monarch put the question plainly to the earl, "What is your own sincere opinion, my lord? Will Sir John keep his word?"

"If I must speak plainly, sire," replied the earl, "I can but reply that I think he will if he can—nay, I am sure of it. But I have some doubts as to his power of doing so;" and he proceeded to explain that an evident jealousy was entertained by the Parliament of the governor of Hull; that his own son was, in fact, merely a spy upon him in the place where he appeared to command, and that, before his own departure, he had heard of the arrival of several Parliamentary officers, and that others were expected, whose presence in the town might act as a check upon Sir John Hotham, and prevent him from executing that which he intended.

Such a view of the case gave the king subject for much meditation, and at length he replied twice, "It were much to be wished that we could find some means, through a confidential person, of holding communication with the governor."

The Earl of Beverley was silent for a moment or two, for he had been dreaming happy dreams, and felt painfully reluctant to put their accomplishment to hazard by placing himself in peril, or, what seemed almost more terrible than death, a long and indefinite imprisonment. When the king repeated nearly the same words, however, and he felt that their application was to himself, he bowed with a grave and resolute air, saying, "If your majesty thinks that my return to Hull can be for your service, I am ready to undertake it."

"It will be greatly for my service, my noble friend," replied Charles, "though it grieves me to place you in a situation of such danger after all you have suffered in this cause."

"Well, sire," replied the earl, with a sigh, "it will be better for me to set out immediately, for, in order to maintain the character I formerly assumed, I must come upon Hull from the other side, and I fear my communications with your majesty must be through York, so that a good deal of inevitable delay will take place."

The farther arrangements between the king and his loyal subject was soon made, and after spending one more brief hour with her he loved, Lord Beverley was again in the saddle to execute the perilous commission he had undertaken.

In a brief conversation between himself and Lord Walton, the latter besought him to seek out the person named O'Donnell, and to gain from him every information he might possess regarding the early history of Arrah Neil. A note was asked in Lord Walton's own hand, begging the Irish merchant to confide fully in the bearer, and, undertaking the commission willingly, the earl rode away towards the banks of the Humber.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WHEN the Earl of Beverley had ridden on about five miles, musing over so many pleasant anticipations, he thought he heard the sound of a horse's feet coming at full speed, and turned round to look. He himself was riding fast, but he now beheld a single horseman spurring on still faster, and supposing that the personage who approached might be some messenger sent after him with further directions from the king, he drew in his rein and suffered him to ride up.

"Ha! Captain Barecolt!" he exclaimed, as soon as the other came near, "is anything the matter? Have you any message from his majesty?"

"None, my lord," replied Barecolt; "but having heard of your expedition, with a hint that, as I had accompanied you before, I might do so again, I lost no time in following; but I was obliged to stop a while to change my dress and put on Captain Jernival."

"This is very rash!" said the earl, after a moment's thought; "very rash indeed, my good friend. You have been seen by so many in your own character, that you have no chance of remaining undiscovered."

"Nor your lordship either," answered Barecolt.

"You do not understand the matter you speak of, sir," replied the earl; "even if I am discovered, it may affect my personal safety, but not the king's service; whereas, if you are recognised as one of his majesty's officers in my company, it may entirely frustrate the objects of my journey. You forget, sir, that the remains of Captain Batten's troop are in Hull, and—"

"The remains of Captain Batten's troop are at Boston, my lord," answered Barecolt. "So much have I learned in Beverley. Sir John Hotham would not receive them, saying that he had no need of cavalry, and that, threatened as he was with siege, they would only eat up his provisions. I know my phiz is a remarkable phiz; but you forget that the beauty thereof has been spoiled by this encounter over the nose; and, besides, the very object of my going is to make a formal complaint to Sir John Hotham of the conduct of Captain Batten in packing me and my friends, among whom I had the good fortune to be only your lordship, and I again one Cornet Stumphorough for

stopping me. Do not fear, my lord, that I will not extricate myself; and if you have any qualms about taking me with you, why, I can easily go in at another gate, and be ready to help you at any moment."

"Well, we will see," answered Lord Beverley, "we will see. I will think over it by the way," and, entering into a conversation with his companion, he rode on. The various subjects discussed between the noble earl and our renowned friend perhaps might not be very interesting to the reader; for, although the dauntless captain at various times approached the subject of those wonderful and surpassing exploits which he had performed during preceding periods of his history, and the recital of which could not fail to excite the admiration and attention of any one possessing common powers of imagination, yet his cruel companion harshly checked him in all such digressions, and forced him to confine his narrative to the precise sorts and kinds of information which he himself desired to obtain. Thus we shall pass over all that took place till the two gentlemen approached within about a mile and a half of the town of Hull, when they perceived a small body of cavalry apparently reconnoitering the place.

"Let us spur on as fast as possible, my lord," said Captain Barecolt, as soon as he perceived the little force.

Bid the earl, who had, by this time, determined that it might be as well that the worthy captain should enter the town with him, though apparently only as a chum companion of the way, and who, moreover, judged at once that the body which they saw was merely a party of the king's troops examining the fortification of Hull, replied in a quiet tone, "There is no need for any such speed, my good sir. Those are friends."

"The more reason, my lord, why we should seem to think them enemies," replied Captain Barecolt, who never neglected any opportunity of a ruse.

"You are right, you are right, captain," replied the earl, "and are, indeed, a great master of stratagems."

Thus saying, he spurred his horse into a gallop, and at that pace pursued his way towards the gates. The natural propensity which every creature has to follow another who runs away from it caused half a dozen of the Cavaliers to gallop after the two apparent fugitives, but the earl and his companion had a start of some distance, and when they arrived at the gates were some two hundred yards before their pursuers. The whole of this proceeding was seen from the walls, upon which a considerable number of citizens were assembled, and a few musket shots were fired upon the party of Cavaliers as soon as the two gentlemen were under cover. The fire did not injure any one, indeed, but it had the effect of inducing the chasing party to halt and retreat very speedily, and the gates being opened, the Earl of Beverley rode in, followed by Barecolt, with their horses panting from the quick pace at which they had come.

All these circumstances were sufficient indications of hostility towards the Royalist party to satisfy the officers of the train-bands at the gates, and with very slight inspection of their passes, the earl and his companion were suffered to ride on into the town, and separating at the corner of the first street, Captain Barecolt rode away towards the Swan, with instructions from

the earl to seek out Mr. O'Donnell, and to make arrangements with him for meeting on the following day.

In the mean while the earl rode on towards the house of the governor, and, dismounting in the court, demagogued, with a foreign accent, as before, to speak with Sir John Hotham. The personage to whom he addressed himself was one of the serving men of that day, known by the general term of blue bottles, but, unfortunately, as it turned out, he was attached to the person of Colonel Hotham, and carried the earl's message to him immediately, without any communication to the governor. Lord Beverley had been kept waiting about five minutes in a hall; and, while several persons passed to and fro, examining him more curiously than was at all pleasant to him, the serving man reappeared, saying, "Be so good as to follow me, sir," and led the young nobleman through several long passages to a small gloomy room on the ground floor, where he found Colonel Hotham standing by a table with his brow heavy and his eyes bent upon the door. He inclined his head slightly as the earl entered, and said, without asking him to be seated, "Be so good, sir, as to explain your business to me. Sir John Hotham, my father, is too ill to receive you, and I am intrusted with his functions during his indisposition."

"Your pardon, sir," replied the earl, calmly, though the meeting was by no means satisfactory to him, and he remarked that the serving man remained at the door, while the tramp of feet was heard in the passage beyond; "my business is with Sir John Hotham alone, and if he be ill, I must wait till he has recovered, for I can communicate with no one but himself."

"You refuse, then?" rejoined Colonel Hotham, with a heavy frown and a sharp tone; "you refuse? If so, I shall know what to suppose."

"Really, sir, I know not what you may think fit to suppose," answered Lord Beverley; "but, very straightforwardly and simply, I do refuse to communicate business concerning Sir John Hotham to any one but himself."

"Then, sir, it is clear you come hither as a spy," said Colonel Hotham, "and shall be dealt with as such."

The Earl of Beverley smiled, and producing the pass he had received from the Governor of Hull, put it into the hands of the Parliamentary officer, saying, "That mistake is easily corrected. Here is my pass in due form, under your father's hand and seal."

Colonel Hotham gazed at it with an angry look, and at the same moment the door by which the young nobleman had been introduced opened, and a party of four or five of the trainbands entered with a prisoner between the two foremost. Lord Beverley turned round at the noise of their feet, and, somewhat to his consternation, beheld in the captive no other than good Digory Falgate. Had it been Barecolt, he could have counted upon his wit and discretion, but the poor painter had displayed no traits during the earl's short journey with him which could at all reassure him, and he expected every moment to hear him claim his acquaintance. But Falgate showed better judgment than was expected, and Colonel Hotham, after staring at the pass for a moment or two with a good deal of anger, but some indecision in his countenance, suddenly seemed to take his resolution, and tore the paper in pieces saying, "This is all folly

and nonsense. A pass under a feigned name is invalid."

"Sir, you have committed an act of gross injustice!" exclaimed the earl, indignantly, "and some day, sooner than you think, you may have to answer for it."

"Indeed!" cried the Parliamentary, with a sneer. "Well, sir, I shall be ready to answer for my acts when needful. See that you be prepared to answer for yours by to-morrow morning. Let loose that fellow!" he continued, turning to the guard. "I can find nothing against him. He is a citizen, it seems. Convey this worthy person to the strong room. Put a sentry over him, and send Captain Marden to me. Take him away, take him away."

"And what are we to do with this un?" asked one of the soldiers.

"Let him loose, fool!" replied Colonel Hotham; and waving his hand, the earl was removed in custody of the party, giving a significant glance to Falgate as he passed. The painter returned it, but said nothing, and Lord Beverley was led along to a small close room, with one high grated window, where the heavy iron-plated door was closed upon him, locked, and barred.

The earl seated himself on the only stool, rested his elbow on the table and his head upon his hand, while the struggle between strong resolution and painful anticipations went on in his mind for nearly half an hour. His was a heart not easily daunted, well fitted by high principles and a calm and equal temper to endure the rougher and more painful things of life, and to encounter the perils and disasters of a troublous epoch better than lighter and gayer characters and less thoughtful minds. Nevertheless, he could not but feel the bitter disappointment which but too frequently follows in the indulgence of bright and high hopes in this our earthly career. He almost blamed himself for the joyful dreams which he had suffered to rest in his imagination while standing with sweet Annie Walton at the window of the house in Beverley, and his thoughts ran back on those dear moments in earlier days, recalling every bright spot in the past, thinking of enjoyments gone and pleasures passed away, with a deep and sad consciousness of the transitory nature of every earthly good. Memory is the true old Mortality of the heart, wandering sadly through the scenes of the past, and refreshing the tombstones of joys gone forever.

As he thus sat, the light began to fade away, and night to fall over the earth; but ere it was quite dark he heard footsteps without, and a voice speaking low to the guard at his door. The conversation ceased, but there was no noise of receding steps, and the earl thought, "They are watching how I bear it. They shall know nothing from that. I will sing;" and, folding his arms upon his chest, he raised his eyes to the faint spot of light that still appeared through the high window, and sang to a plaintive air of the time some lines composed towards the end of the preceding reign, perhaps by some victim to the coarse tyranny of James I.

SONG.

"Life's brighter part has pass'd away!
The dark remains behind:
The autumn brown rests on the earth;
Loud howls the wintry wind.
But steadfast hope and faith sincere
Shall still afford their light:
While these remain, this mortal gloom
Can not be wholly night.

The summer flowers that once were here
Have faded from the eye;
The merle has ceased to cheer the shade,
The lark to wake the sky.

Green leaves have fallen from the trees,
Dark clouds are overhead,
And wither'd things beneath my feet
Rattle where'er I tread.

But yet I know there is a land,
Where all that's lost on earth
Reverts to blossom and to bloom
With undecaying birth.

True meadfast hope and faith anon
Shall still afford me light,
Till other scenes shall dimipate
The gloom of mortal night."

CHAPTER XL.

WHILE such misadventures had been the lot of the Earl of Beverley, Captain Barecolt had ridden on unopposed and peaceably to the little inn called the Swan. He was in some apprehension, indeed, lest he should encounter worthy Mr. Dry, of Long-oaken, at the house of good Mrs. White; but he held a mind prepared to meet any emergency, and therefore would not be turned from his course by the fear of "any Dry that ever yet was born." Alighting, then, at the door, he threw, the rein of his horse over a hook provided for that especial purpose, and then mounting the steps, looked in through the panes of glass in the door, which, to say truth, afforded him no very clear insight in the passage beyond, as each separate square, being blown in a somewhat rude fashion, was furnished with a thick green knot or bump in the centre, which greatly impeded the view. All seemed clear, however, and marvellously silent; and after having carried his inspection as far as he judged necessary, the renowned captain opened the door and walked in. As soon as he did so, he perceived the good landlady seated in her little glass case alone, and busily engaged in hemming a wimple for her own proper person. She raised her eyes as usual at the sound of the opening door, and her face lighted up at the sight of the long limbs that presented themselves in a manner which showed the illustrious commander that no danger was to be apprehended. Approaching, then, with a gallant air, Captain Barecolt unceremoniously entered the parlour, and saluted the fair hostess, who expressed herself right glad to see him, asking him a thousand questions about "the dear young lady and her adventures on the road."

"All in good time, Mrs. White! all in good time!" answered Captain Barecolt. "To-night, God willing, I will give you a true and particular account of all that has happened since last we met; but now I have other things to think of. In the first place, my mouth is as dry as a sick dog's nose, and I would fain have a choppin' of something to moisten it."

"That you shall, captain, in a minute," answered the landlady. "You look dusty and tired, as if you had ridden hard."

"And so I have, sweet hostess," answered Barecolt; "and the dust is not more on my garments than between my teeth. My tongue is as parched as a bowl of split pease. Do you not hear it rattle? But do not go yourself for the wine, Mrs. White. Transfer that function to one of your nymphs, and listen to me."

"I.e. captain, I have no nymphs," answered the landlady, half offended; but her hero waved

his hand, saying, "Well, your maidens, then, Mrs. White. Call Sally, and then answer me two or three questions; but first send one to stable my horse, which is at the door, and, being a modest beast, may as well be removed from the lewd gaze of the townsfolk."

All was performed according to his command; and when Mrs. White returned, Captain Barecolt proceeded, after a deep draught without libation, to put his questions.

"First and foremost, Mrs. White," he said, "what of old Dry?"

"Lord, sir, he is up stairs sick in bed," replied Mrs. White.

"There let him lie, and be the bed on him, white-livered renegade," cried Captain Barecolt. "Then he did not discover that you had aided and abetted in the escape of our fair demoiselle?"

"Oh, not a whit," replied the landlady. "He was in a mighty rage, to be sure, at first; and he had search made and a great fuss; but it all ended in nothing, and I managed slyly, pretending to help with all my might, so that he grew quite fond and familiar, the nasty old worm. However, he went out of the gates one day, leaving all his things here, and what happened I don't know, but he came back the next morning as dull and as dirty looking as a mizen, and took to his bed directly, and has had a doctor at him ever since. I think something must have frightened him sadly, for he has been whining and praying ever since, and the doctor said he had had a turn."

"So far so well, Mrs. White," said Barecolt; "but we must now look to other matters. Do you know aught about Mr. O'Donnell; for, if possible, I must see him to-night."

"I should think you would find him, sir," answered the hostess, "for he keeps himself a great deal at home just now. These are sad times in Hull, sir; there is great suspicion about, and every one whom they fancy to be what they call a malignant is pointed at and watched night and day; and even a poor widow woman like me they cannot help looking after as if I were a regiment of soldiers, so that customers are afraid to come."

"Well, what of O'Donnell, what of O'Donnell?" demanded Captain Barecolt. "What has this to do with him, my good hostess?"

"Why, bless you, captain, don't you know that people say he is a papist?" exclaimed Mrs. White; "and so they are likely to be more sharp upon him than any one else; that is to say, not the governor, who is very fond of him, people say, because he supplies him with Dantzic and other strong waters better than he can get at home; but since Sir John has been ill of the gout, the colonel, his son, rules everything here in Hull, and a hard rule is his for every one but Roundheals. They may do as they like. Some men may lie abed and sleep, while others must get up early in the morning."

All this was news to Captain Barecolt, and news of a very unpleasant character, which made him ponder deeply for several minutes. Being of an active and inquiring turn of mind, he had not left his leisure time unemployed since he left Hull, and partly by no very definite hints, sewn together by surmises, and partly by open avowals and accidental conversations, he had been led by the conclusion that some very intimate communication had been opened between Sir John Hotham and the Earl of Beverley, which the illness of the former and the new state

of things in the town might sadly derange. He longed eagerly to gain some intelligence of the proceedings of his noble fellow-traveller, and though he had a sufficient portion of the free companion in his character to act upon his own judgment with very little deference for the commands he received when it suited his own purpose, yet he had sufficient of the old soldier in him to obey orders punctually when he could do no better. He therefore resolved to set out for O'Donnell's house at once, though he could not bring his mind to do so without draining another can; and while the worthy landlady went to draw it with her own fair hands, he sat pondering over what was to be done next with no inconsiderable misgivings in regard to the termination of their expedition. At one time, indeed, he thought of cutting the whole matter very short, walking to the governor's house, demanding to see Colonel Hotham, running him through the body with his Toledo, and, with the assistance of the more loyal inhabitants, taking possession of the town in the king's name. It seemed to the eyes of imagination an exploit worthy of a Barecote, but reflection suggested to him various little objections which made him abandon his scheme, though he did it with reluctance. The vision of becoming Governor of Hull, which the king, he thought, could never refuse to grant him if he took the city with his own right hand, was just fading away from his mind, when the outer door of the inn was thrown vehemently open, and some one entered the passage with a quick and agitated step. Captain Barecote looked up and gazed forth from Mrs. White's glass case, at the same time laying his hand upon his sword, for he was full of desperate and sanguinary thoughts. In a moment, however, his countenance lighted up, and exclaiming, "Ah! Diggory Falgate! Honest Diggory Falgate! Something may perhaps be done now. His knowledge of the place and the people may aid us at this pinch, and my hand shall execute what his information suggests." He opened the door, and went out to meet the poor painter, extending his hand to him in friendly guise.

Diggory Falgate started back as if he had seen an apparition, but the next moment grasped Barecote's hand, and exclaimed, "This is lucky indeed! who would have thought to see you here, captain? But listen to me. I have got a story to tell you that will make your hairs stand on end. Two, indeed, but one first, for that presses; and if something is not done immediately, the earl is a dead man."

"What earl?" demanded Barecote, in horror and consternation.

"Why our earl, to be sure," replied Falgate, walking into Mrs. White's sanctum sanctorum. "The Earl of Heverley, no other; and that Saracen of a colonel will have him shot to-morrow morning as sure as I'm a living man, if something is not done to-night to prevent it."

"I'll cut his throat first," replied Barecote, half drawing his sword; "but he dare not, he dare not, Master Falgate. It's all nonsense."

"He shot two men yesterday morning by the water side," replied Falgate. "Didn't he, Mrs. White?"

The latter words were addressed to the worthy landlady just as she returned with the fresh chopin, and while Captain Barecote drained it down in one single inignant draught, she confirmed the poor painter's account, saying, "Ay, that he did, the bloodthirsty brute, and better men than him-self, too."

"What's to be done now?" cried Barecote. "The only way will be to go and put him to death at once."

"You will only get yourself killed, and do us no good," cried the painter and the landlady together; and Falgate, proceeding alone, went on to add, "There is but one way to help the noble lord, captain, if we can but arrive at it, and that is to get some one to tell Sir John Hotham himself. He'd never suffer all this to go on if he knew it; and it is only since he fell ill the day before yesterday morning that his son has dared to go on so."

"I'll write him a note," said Barecote.

"Pooh! that will never do," replied the painter; "unless you can get some one to deliver it to Sir John himself."

"I am talking without guide indeed," said the gallant captain, who began to feel that his nonsense was a little too gross even for the intellects of the landlady and the painter. "I do not yet know the whole circumstances. Pray, Master Falgate, have the goodness to relate all you know, and how you know it, and then I will decide upon my plan from the intelligence I receive. Be so good as to avoid superfluous particulars, and yet be sufficiently minute in your details to afford me a distinct knowledge of the facts;" and, assuming a grave and sententious look of wisdom, he sat with his hands folded upon his knees, while Diggory Falgate went on to inform him that he had been arrested while entering the town three days before, and placed in the custody of a body of the train-bands, with some of whom he was personally acquainted and on very friendly terms. He had remained in terror of his life under their guard till that evening, receiving accounts from time to time of the wrath and fury which Colonel Hotham was exercising upon the unfortunate Cavaliers of the place, and employing all the interest he could make to obtain his own liberation. That afternoon he had been brought in, he said, not knowing whether the next word was to be life or death, when, to his surprise and grief, he beheld the earl in the presence of the governor's son. He then related all the particulars which he had seen, and a new consultation took place, which bade fair to have no end, when suddenly the worthy hostess exclaimed, "Mr. O'Donnell's the man. He can do it, I tell you, when no one else can."

"Do what?" exclaimed Captain Barecote. "Prithee, my excellent lady, what can he do?"

"Why, get in to speak to Sir John Hotham," rejoined the worthy landlady, "and tell him all about it."

"Then, as I said before," exclaimed the renowned captain, "I will go to him this minute. Come along, Falgate; you shall go with me, for there's no time to be lost."

"That there isn't," replied Diggory Falgate. "I'm your man, captain;" and away they went, begging Mrs. White not to go to bed till they returned.

CHAPTER XLI.

It was nearly dark when the renowned Captain Barecote and Diggory Falgate issued forth into the streets of Hull, and silence, and well-nigh solitude, had fallen over the town; for the people of that good city were ever particularly attentive to the hour of supper, which was now approaching. Captain Barecote then ventured

to give his companion a familiar and patronising slap on the shoulder, saying, "Ah! Diggorry Falgate, honest Diggorry Falgate! I never thought to see thee again in the land of the living."

"I certainly thought," replied the painter, in a grave tone, "that I was on the high road to the land of the dead. But it was not fair of you, captain, upon my life, to leave me outside in the hands of those men. Why, they talked of hanging me without benefit of clergy."

"Fair!" cried Barecolt, indignantly; "how could I help it, Diggorry? Did I not exact more wonders than a man, to save all of the party? Did I not kill six Roundheads with my own hand? Did I not swim the moat, open the gates, fight in the front, protect the rear, kill the captain, disperse the troopers, and effect the retreat of my party with the loss of none but you, my poor Diggorry? What could man do more? You were but as a cannon, a falconet, a saker, which we were obliged to leave in the hands of the enemy; nor was it discovered for some time that you were not with us. When it was discovered, too, what did I do? Did I not issue forth, and thinking that you might be lying covered with honourable wounds in some foul ditch by the roadside, did I not search for you for miles around the field of battle?"

"No, did you, though?" said Diggorry Falgate. "Well, that was kind, captain."

"Nay, did I not pursue the search till after midnight?" continued Barecolt. "Ask Lord Walton; ask the noble earl! but now that I have found you, worthy Diggorry, I would fain hear how you contrived to escape from the hands of the Philistines. You are not exactly a Samson, Diggorry, and I should have thought they would have bound you with bonus you could not break."

"Hush!" said the painter; "here is some one coming."

The person who approached was merely a labouring man, who had been detained somewhat late at his work, and he passed on without speaking; but the pause thus obtained in the conversation between Captain Barecolt and Diggorry Falgate afforded the latter time for a little reflection. It had been his purpose to communicate to his companion the whole of his adventures, and what he had discovered in the church on the hill; but as he thought, this design was altered. A conviction had gradually impressed itself upon his mind, since first he had become acquainted with the grandiloquent Captain Barecolt, that the great warrior was in the habit of attributing to himself the actions and discoveries of others, or, at all events, of taking more than his due share of credit for anything in which he had part; and as Falgate had seldom had an opportunity of distinguishing himself in any way except by painting strange faces, coats of arms, or wonderful beasts upon the sign-boards, he wisely judged that it would be expedient not to let slip any part of the occasion which, as he thought, now presented itself. When Captain Barecolt, therefore, returned to the charge, and required a detail of his adventures, Falgate gave him such an account as was perfectly satisfactory to his interrogator, and which, moreover, had the advantage of being true, though that very important item in the Old Bailey oath, the whole truth, was not exactly stated. He related how he had been carried off by the Roundhead party; how he had been questioned touching the gentlemen with whom he had been lately con-

sorring; how he had refused stoutly to answer, and had been threatened with death; how he had been shut up in the old church, and left there under a guard. There, however, the minute exactitude of the painter's statement halted, and he merely added that, finding the door leading from the church into the vaults open, he had escaped by that means of exit, and, after hiding for some time in the neighbourhood, had heard that the troop which had taken him had been sent on to Boston, upon which he had ventured to return to Hull.

For his faithful discretion, Captain Barecolt bestowed upon him high commendation, declared that some day he would be a great man if he would but learn to ride, and offered to be himself his instructor in that elegant art. By the time that the praises of the worthy officer were at an end, however, they were approaching the out-of-the-way spot at which the dwelling of Mr. O'Donnell was situated; but, in attempting to approach the water side, they were turned back by a sentinel, who, on being asked how they were to get to the house they wanted to visit, replied they must go to the back door.

Luckily, Diggorry Falgate was acquainted with the street in which that back door was situated, and to it they accordingly went, pulled the ring of a bell, and produced the slow appearance of the tidy old woman whom Barecolt had seen before. In reply to his inquiries for Mr. O'Donnell, however, on this occasion, she asserted he was out; but the worthy captain, whose senses, as the reader knows, were generally on the alert, finished the sentence for her, saying, "Out of tobacco, do you mean, ma'am? Good faith, if he smokes away at the rate he is now doing in the parlour, he may well consume a quintal in a short space. Go in, my good lady, and tell him that a gentleman is here who bears him news of old Sergeant Neil's grand daughter."

The poor woman was confounded at the worthy captain's quickness, and well accustomed to the vapour of tobacco, could not divine how the visitor had discovered that her master was smoking in the parlour, unless he had looked through a crack in the window. Without more ado, then, she retreated, leaving the stranger in possession of the passage, and in a moment after O'Donnell's head was thrust out of a door: "the farther end, taking a view of his two visitors."

"Oh, come in, come in," he said, at length, as he recognised Barecolt. "Whom have you got there with you? Come in. Ah! painter, is that you?"

Without replying to his various questions, Barecolt and Falgate walked on into his parlour, which they found cloudy with smoke, while a large jug, emitting the steam of hot water, kept company with a large black bottle with the cork half out, which apparently contained a stronger fluid. O'Donnell shut the door carefully, and then at once began to interrogate Barecolt in regard to Arrah Neil, asking how she had fared on the journey, whether she had found Lord Walton and his sister, and where she actually was.

During the progress of these questions, which were put with great rapidity, Falgate sat silent, but noting attentively every word that was said, and marking the name of Lord Walton particularly in his memory, as apparently the chief friend of the young lady at whose escape he had assisted.

"She got off well, though through a hailstorm of dangers, Master O'Donnell," replied Barecolt, in a quick, hurried tone. "She has rejoined Lord Walton and his sister, and she is now at Beverley. Ask no more questions at present; but listen, and you shall have farther information concerning Mrs. Arrah to-morrow, God willing. At present, we have other things to think of—business of life and death, Master O'Donnell."

"Abl devil fly away with it," cried the Irishman; "that is always the way—nothing but business of life and death nowadays. A plain man can't drive a plain trade quietly without being taxed about business of life and death. But I will have nothing to do with it, I tell you. I am a peaceable, well-disposed man, who hates secrets and abominates business of life and death. There, take some Geneva and water, if you will. It is better than all the business in the world. Run and get some drinking-cups, Master Painter."

Falgate, who seemed to have been in the house before, did as he was directed, and as soon as his back was turned, O'Donnell demanded, "What is this business? One cannot speak before your companion. He is a rattled, silly fellow."

"But a very faithful one," answered Barecolt, doing the poor painter justice; "and this affair he knows all about already. But the matter is shortly this, my good friend: a noble gentleman is here in Hull, having business with Sir John Hotham, and charged, moreover, by Lord Walton to speak with you concerning Mrs. Arrah Neil. He is my particular friend, and while he went on to the governor's house, I went to the Swan, requested by him to see you and fix a meeting for to-morrow morning. However, when he arrives at Sir John Hotham's, he finds no one but his son, Sir John being very ill."

"Ahl by —, here's a pretty affair!" cried O'Donnell. "Very ill Sir John is not. He has got the gout in one foot and both hands, and is as cross as the yards of a ship; but his son takes all the business upon himself, and a base business he makes of it. What more? what more?"

"Why, the son causes this noble gentleman to be arrested immediately for a spy, tears his pass to pieces, and will not let him see the governor, and threatens to shoot him to-morrow morning."

"And so he will, to be sure!" cried O'Donnell; "but what's to be done? How in the fiend's name can I help you? I'll not meddle with it! Not a whit! I shall get shot myself some day if I don't mind."

As he was speaking, Diggory Falgate returned with two drinking-cups, and without waiting for Barecolt's reply, he tapped O'Donnell on the shoulder, saying, "I'll tell you how you can help us, Master O'Donnell. Nothing so easy in life; and no danger to yourself either, though you are not a fellow to fear that. All that is wanted is to let the governor know what is going on, and he'll soon stop the colonel's doings; for the pass was in his own hand, which that wild beast tore, and it will be an eternal blot upon his honour, worse than a black bead sinker in the shield of his arms, if any harm happens to the earl after giving him that."

"The earl!" said O'Donnell. "Oh ho! he is an earl, is he?"

"What have you said, you fool?" cried Barecolt, turning angrily upon Falgate; but the paint-

er, though he turned somewhat red, put the best face he could upon it, saying, "Well, it's a slip of the tongue, captain; but it can't be helped, and you know you can trust him."

"Ay, ay! trust me, sure enough," answered the Irishman; "but how am I to do anything in this?" and, leaning his head upon his hand, he mused while Barecolt mixed himself some Geneva and hot water, not particularly potent of the latter, and Falgate stood gazing at the master of the house as if waiting for him to speak farther.

"I'll tell you what you can do, Master O'Donnell," said the painter at length, laying his hand upon the other's arm: "you can put on your hat and cloak, and go down to Sir John Hotham, and ask to speak with him for a moment about his gout. We know he will see you, for Mrs. White told us all about it."

"And if you have a snug little bottle of cordial waters under your arm, you are sure to get in," added Barecolt. "Come, come, Master O'Donnell, do not hesitate. There is no time to be lost."

"On my life, that's a pretty joke," cried O'Donnell, starting up. "That I am to go and put my neck in peril for a man I never saw in my life. I tell you I'll have nothing to do with it. It's a bad case, and if they shoot him they must."

In vain, to all appearance, were the eloquence of Barecolt and the arguments of the painter. The best they could obtain from O'Donnell was a vague and unsatisfactory reply that he would go on the morrow, or that he would see about it. He asked, nevertheless, a number of questions, as if he felt some interest in the affair, which for near half an hour had the effect of inducing his two visitors to believe that their entreaties would ultimately prove effectual; but at length he suddenly turned the conversation to another subject, and once more inquired of Arrah Neil; and Barecolt, rising, wished him good-night in a sullen and disappointed tone, saying that, as he would have no hand in it, some one else must be found who would undertake the task which he declined.

As soon as the mighty captain issued forth into the street, however, he burst into a laugh, much to Falgate's surprise. But Barecolt laughed again, saying, "He will do it, Master Falgate, he will do it, take my word for it. He is a cunning old chap, that Master O'Donnell, and he will not let us know what he is going to do; but he'll go."

"I don't think it, Captain Barecolt, I don't think it," replied Falgate, sadly; "and we cannot trust the good earl's safety to such a chance."

"I don't intend to trust to any chance at all, Diggory Falgate," answered Barecolt, in one of his supreme tones. "You do not suppose an officer of my experience will rest satisfied without clear knowledge of what he is about. Draw back with me, Master Falgate. Go you under shadow of that entry, where you can see his door in front. I will post myself by that pent-house, where I can command both streets. He cannot escape us then, and we will give him twenty minutes; but if he comes forth, say not a word, move not a finger. Rest as quiet as one of the door nails till he has gone, and then come and join me."

Not five of the twenty minutes which Captain Barecolt had allowed for the issuing forth of Mr. O'Donnell had elapsed, when the door of his house opened, and a tall figure appeared, which, turning back its head, said aloud, "Turn the

lock, Dorothy," and then took its way up the street without observing either of the two watchers. Diggorry Falgate was soon by Barecoli's side, and they followed together upon the steps of the worthy Irishman till they saw him approach the governor's house and enter the court; after which, they again ensconced themselves under a gateway in order to obtain the means of judging, by the duration of O'Donnell's stay, whether he was admitted to the presence of Sir John Hotham or not. Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, half an hour passed, and O'Donnell not having reappeared when the clock struck ten, Barecoli and his companion, satisfied that their end was so far accomplished, made the best of their way back to the sign of the Swan. The cautious captain, however, to make assurance doubly sure, directed Falgate to proceed at break of day once more to the merchant's house, and to question him closely in regard to the result of his visit; after which, having communicated to Mrs. White what success they had achieved, and received her opinion that Master O'Donnell would leave no stone unturned to effect their object, they sat down to a good supper, which she had prepared for them in the room where Mr. Dry had dined with Arrah Neil, and enjoyed themselves for half an hour.

At the end of that time, Falgate, pronouncing himself tired, left Captain Barecoli with the flag-on, which he did not propose to leave for another hour, and retired, taking care to close the door after him. His course, however, did not lie straight to bed; for, finding the worthy landlady locking up her spoons and ladies in her little parlour, he joined her there, and entered into conversation with her in a low and confidential tone. Their conference lasted near half an hour, carried on apparently with some reluctance by Mrs. White at first, but gradually becoming animated on her part also; and at length, when Falgate asked her, "You are quite sure she was buried there, and that that was what was on her coffin?" she replied, "I'll take my oath of it; I'll give it under my hand, if you like."

"I wish you would, Mrs. White," answered the painter; and receiving her promise that it should be done on the following day, he retired to bed.

Before we close this somewhat long chapter, it may be necessary to trace to a certain point the proceedings of our worthy friend O'Donnell; but we will do so very briefly. Having passed the sentinel in the court of the governor's house, he approached a small door at the side, and knocked for admission. A servant appeared almost immediately, but far from asking directly to speak with Sir John Hotham, he said, "Ah! Master Wilson, is Oliver within? I want a chat with him."

"Walk in, Master O'Donnell," replied the man, "and I will send for him. He was with Sir John a minute ago."

O'Donnell said no more words, but entered in silence, and after having been left for a minute or two in the dark passage, he was joined by Oliver, the governor's body servant, as he was called, with a light. The two shook hands with great good-will, and Master Oliver drew his Irish friend into a little room on the left, where immediately O'Donnell produced two large flat-sided, long-necked bottles from under his cloak, and sitting one down on the table, said, "That's for you, Noll; and this is some gout cordial for the governor, which will soon send all his ailments away."

"God grant it!" replied the man; "for he w in a devil of a humour. Shall I take it to him, Master O'Donnell? Many thanks for the good stuff."

"Welcome, welcome," replied his companion; "but you must get me speech of Sir John this very night; for I have got a dozen bottles of cinnamon, such as you never tasted in your days, and a gentleman in the town wants them. So I promised to give him an answer before I went to bed, but thought it only dutiful to talk to the governor about them first, in case he should like any."

"Ay, he'll talk about that," replied the servant, "though he won't talk of anything else. Come up with me to his door, and we'll soon see if he'll speak with you. Bring your bottle with you. That's as good as a pass."

"Better sometimes," replied O'Donnell, dryly; and following the servant up stairs and into the better part of the house, he was kept for a moment or two in the corridor, and then admitted to the presence of Sir John Hotham.

CHAPTER XLII.

DAY dawned at length into the dark and lonely prison of the Earl of Beverley; the bright warm day, clear and beautiful, and rosy with the hue of the rising sun. A long ray of light streamed through the high window, and painted the opposite wall; then slowly descending as the orb rose farther in the heaven, it rested on the graceful figure and the rich curling hair of the captive as he still sat at the table, but with his head now bent down upon his folded arms, just asleep. The quiet sunshine did not wake him, for he had watched, with anxious thoughts for his only companions, through the greater part of the night, and not till about an hour before morning had slumber fallen upon him; but he was not destined long to know repose, for shortly after dawn a voice was heard in the room saying, "Is there any one below?" It seemed to come from the chimney, and approaching, he replied aloud, "Yes! who speaks?"

"Who are you? What is your name?" demanded the voice; but though the tones seemed not unfamiliar to Lord Beverley's ear, he could not, of course, venture to give his real name to a person he did not see, and he replied, "That is nothing to any one. Who is he that talks to me?"

"My name is Ashburnham," replied the person, who seemed speaking from some room above; "a prisoner like yourself, if you be one."

"I am indeed, Ashburnham," answered the earl. "I will not speak my name, lest there should be other ears listening, but I am he whom you joined going to France, and who was taken with you."

"Bad luck indeed," cried Colonel Ashburnham. "Hotham has lied, then, for he told me you were gone."

"He spake truth there," answered the earl; "but, an ill fortune would have it, I returned last night on business, and was arrested by his son, who tore my pass, and vows he will try me as a spy."

"Ay, a curse fall upon him!" cried the other voice; "he respects no rules of honour or courtesy; and since his father fell ill, has put me in close confinement. If Hotham could know, he would treat you better; but I cannot help you, for I am locked in here."

"Hush!" cried the earl; "here are steps coming."

The next moment the key was turned in the lock, the bar taken down, and two soldiers appeared. In a dull and indifferent tone, as if he were bidding the prisoner come to the morning meal, one of the men told Lord Beverley to follow him to the colonel's council; and obeying with very little hope that anything he could say would change the stern purpose of the Parliamentary officer, the earl was led along the passage to what seemed a dining hall on the same floor, in which he found Colonel Hotham seated at a table, with four inferior officers round him. Two wore the garb of the train-bands; the others seemed strangers to the city; for when the prisoner entered, they were asking some questions concerning the fortifications. His appearance, however, instantly drew their eyes upon himself, and walking with a firm step to the end of the table, he gazed calmly over them, scanning the countenance of each of those who seemed assembled to judge him, not at all abashed by the dark and somewhat fierce stare with which one or two regarded him.

Colonel Hotham had in general chosen his men well. The two Londoners he had long known as very unscrupulous and fiery zealots in the cause of the Parliament, and Capt. Marden, one of the officers of the train-bands, whom he had called to his aid, had made himself somewhat remarkable on several occasions by his gloomy fierceness of disposition. He had commanded the party by whom the two unfortunate men mentioned by Faigate had been put to death, and he had seemed only the more morose and dogged after the horrid scene in which he had borne a part. The fourth officer was known as a religious enthusiast, a preacher in one of the conventicles in the city, and, as was generally supposed, as wild and unsparing as the rest; so that Colonel Hotham entertained no doubts that his purposes towards the prisoner would receive the sanction of these men's authority without scruple or hesitation on their part.

After pausing for a moment, while the earl stood at the end of the table, as we have described, the Parliamentary commander demanded, in a sharp tone, "What is your name?"

"Not knowing that you have any authority to ask it," replied the earl, with perfect calmness, "I shall most undoubtedly refuse to answer."

"That will serve you little, sir," said one of the men from London; "for if you do refuse, the court will proceed to try you without farther ceremony."

"What court?" demanded the earl. "I see five persons sitting round a table, but no court."

"This, sir, is a summary court martial," replied Colonel Hotham, "called to try a person accused of entering a garrisoned town as a spy."

"With a pass from the governor," added Lord Beverley, emphatically.

"But that pass, we have every reason to believe," replied Colonel Hotham, "was obtained under a false representation of your name and quality, and, as such, was invalid."

"That point will be easily established," replied the earl, "by calling the governor himself. I maintain that he gave it to me with full knowledge of my person, and I therefore require that he be called to testify as to the validity of the pass, which you, sir, most dishonourably and dishonestly tore to pieces last night."

"The governor is too ill, sir, to give his evidence," said one of the officers from London.

"If, gentlemen, your purpose is to commit a cool, deliberate murder," said the earl, "you may do it without all this ceremony. I am in your hands, have no power to resist you, and no means of obtaining justice; but I will not further your views by recognising this as a court, which is, in fact, none at all. If Sir John Hotham is too ill to attend, delay the inquiry till he is better. I stand upon the safe conduct which I received from him, and if you violate it you are murderers, and not men of honour."

"Had he a pass?" demanded one of the officers of the train-bands, turning gloomily to Colonel Hotham.

"He had, but under a feigned name," replied that officer.

"What proof have you?" demanded the enthusiast. "Remember, sir, 'who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' If you bring not your father to testify, how can we know that this safe conduct was wrongly obtained?"

Colonel Hotham's cheek turned red, for he loved not such opposition, and he paused for a moment ere he replied, feeling that he was angry, and fearing that he might commit himself.

"I think," he answered, at length, in a tone so soft that it betrayed the struggle to keep down his passion, "I think that we can prove that it was obtained under a false name by other witnesses, without disturbing my father, which might be dangerous;" and then turning to the two guards who remained at the door, he said, "Where is the other prisoner? Let him be brought in. Has the other man been summoned, who is said to know something of these persons?"

"Yes, colonel," replied the man to whom he spoke. "They are both without there, one in one room, the other in another."

"Bring in the prisoner first," said Colonel Hotham. "We will confront them together, gentlemen."

A pause ensued for about the space of two minutes, during which no one spoke, except one of the officers of the train-bands, who said a few words to the other in a low voice; and then the door opened, and, turning round his head, the earl, as he had apprehended, beheld the renowned Captain Barecolt marched in among some soldiers. As it was not the first time that the worthy officer had found himself in such an unpleasant position, he showed himself very little disturbed by his situation, and walked up to the end of the table with a bold countenance, smoothing down his mustaches and drawing his beard to a point between his fingers, as if he had not had time to complete his toilet ere he was brought from the inn.

The cool self-sufficiency of his air seemed to move the wrath of Colonel Hotham, who instantly addressed him, saying, "What is your name, fellow?"

"I be not your fellow, sair," replied Barecolt, boldly, "and am not so call. My name were Capitaine Jersval, for your sairvice, gentlemen."

"And now speak out, and speak the truth," continued the colonel, while Barecolt bowed ceremoniously round the table; "leave your mumming, sir, and answer. Who is this person with whom you entered the town yesterday evening? Answer truly, for your life depends upon it."

"Begar, it were one very difficult thing for me to tell," replied Barecolt, in the same wheedling

cerned tone; "first, sair, it cannot alway be easy to tell who one be one's self; and much more uneasy to tell who de oder man be."

"What does the fool mean?" demanded one of the Roundhead officers. "Not always easy to tell who you are yourself: what do you mean, man?"

"Why, sair," replied Barecolt, with an agreeable laugh, "one day, not so very long time ago, I meet wid one saucy man, who to my face—to my very beard, sair—swear I were one oder man but myself. He swear I were not Jernval, but Barecolt—one Capitaine Barecolt, a very great man in dese parts—a famous man, I hear."

"Cease this foolery, sir," cried Colonel Hotham, "and answer my question directly, or prepare to walk out to the water gate and receive a volley. Who is the person, I say, now standing beside you?"

"Pard! how de devil should I know?" rejoined Barecolt, with some heat of manner. "I have seen him twice, dat is all; once aboard de sheep, where he was very seek, and once I met him just half a league out of de gate. We were chase hard by a party of what you call Cavalier malignant, and ride togeder for our lifes."

"That is true, for I saw them," said one of the officers of the train-bands.

"And do you pretend to say you do not know his name?" demanded Colonel Hotham, gazing with the fierceness of disappointment upon the worthy captain's face.

"Oh! I think I heard his name on board de sheep," answered Barecolt; "but I cannot be so sure. Let me see! It was de Colonel de Mery, was it not, that you told me, sair?" and he turned to the earl with a low bow.

"I answer no questions here, sir," replied Lord Beverley; "this is no lawful court, and the people are not seeking justice, but a pretext for murder."

"Ah! murder! dat be very bad," cried Captain Barecolt, with a shrug of his shoulders; "men may kill one de oder in fair fight very well; but murder be very bad indeed. Perhaps dey murder me too."

"Very likely," answered the earl, dryly; but Colonel Hotham exclaimed, "Silence! I have given you an opportunity, sir, of saving your life by telling plainly who this man is. You would not take it; and now we shall soon see who you are yourself. Bring in that Mr. Dry."

Captain Barecolt's countenance fell; for he had remarked the room door of Mr. Dry open on the preceding night as he walked somewhat late to bed; and though he had not been aware at the time that the worthy master of Longsoaken was awake and watching, he doubted not now that his own arrest was owing to that gentleman's good offices. He prepared for the worst, however, and determined to adhere to his story stoutly, thanking his stars that he had mentioned his rencounter with Cornet Stumpborough before Mr. Dry was called.

He was not kept long in suspense, however, for not more than half a minute elapsed before Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, entered the room with his face very pale and his nose very blue, as if recovering from a severe illness; and taking his place at a convenient distance from the renowned captain, replied at once to Colonel Hotham's first question. "That, worshipful sir, that is *one* Captain Barecolt, a notorious malignant,

now actually in arms against the authority of the two houses."

"Ah! I tell you so!" cried Barecolt, with a well-feigned look of impatience. "Capitaine Barecolt again! Cuss Capitaine Barecolt! how he swear me black in de face dat I were Capitaine Barecolt, just as de oder did."

"I will swear, to be sure," replied Mr. Dry; "for, as I have a conscience and a soul to be saved, you are the man. We all know you are very cunning, Captain Barecolt; but if you can cheat in others, you cannot cheat in this matter. I know you well enough after having been carried along as a captive in bonds by you and other Amorites like you for several mortal days."

"What he mean by Amorite?" asked Barecolt, with a look of ignorance; but Colonel Hotham interposed, saying, "That will do, sir; stand down; you shall hear more as soon as you could wish. Now, worshipful Master Dry, be so good as to look well at that other person, and say if you have seen him before."

Mr. Dry did as he was directed; but the appearance of the earl puzzled him more; for, though the beauty of his features and the dignity of his carriage were remarkable, yet even to those who had seen him often the black dye with which he had tinged his hair and beard made so great a change that it would have been difficult to recognise him.

"Yes," said the master of Longsoaken at length, "yes, I am very sure I have seen him before, though I think his hair was of a different colour then. I met him as he was riding up to the house of the malignant Lord Walton, at Bishop's Merton. He stayed there all night, I heard, on the day when the house took fire. I am quite sure it is the same, though his hair is dyed."

"It is," replied Colonel Hotham, in a stern and determined tone; "and I will tell you who he is, gentlemen; for though he thinks I do not know him, yet I do. I was a fool not to recognise him at first. This, sir, is the noble Earl of Beverley, who has now come into this parish of Hull as a spy, and deserves death by all the laws of war."

"It is false, sir," answered the earl, gazing upon him fixedly. "Whoever I am, I came not here as a spy."

"Do you mean to deny your name, my lord?" demanded Colonel Hotham.

"I mean to answer no questions, sir," said the earl, "but merely to give you the lie in your teeth when you assert a falsehood. I stand upon your father's safe conduct, and call him to witness that he gave it to me."

"The pass I tore was not in favour of the Earl of Beverley," replied the officer; "and that you are he, will soon be proved, though I thought fit to call these men first. Ask Colonel Jackson to step hither," he continued, speaking to the guard, "and the two other gentlemen in the red room."

The name he mentioned was familiar to the earl of Lord Beverley, who remembered that Colonel Jackson was in the hall when he had had his first interview with Sir John Hotham; but, owing to the disguise which he had assumed, had not recognised him on that occasion. He could little hope, however, that he would fail to do so now, when his attention was particularly drawn to the examination, and the matter was but too soon decided. Three officers were one by one introduced into the room, and told to as-

amine the earl, and state who he was; and each, though with apparent regret, pronounced the words "Lord Beverley."

"The case is clear, gentlemen," said Colonel Hotham; "the Earl of Beverley, under a feigned name and an invalid pass, has introduced himself into this garrison. It is for you to say, under these circumstances, whether he is or is not a spy, and subject to the invariable law of such a case."

"Remembering always," rejoined the earl, "that you have no proof that the safe conduct was invalid, Colonel Hotham having torn it, so that it has never been beneath your eyes; and not forgetting that, even supposing this to be a lawfully-constituted court-martial, which I deny, he having no authority to summon one, he has refused to call the only witness I judged necessary to my defence." He spoke calmly and firmly, with his cheek, perhaps, a shade paler than it usually was, but with no other visible sign of emotion, while the countenance of Colonel Hotham, on whom his eyes were fixed, worked with many mingled passions, which resisted control.

"This is all vain and foolish," cried the latter. "I will tell the earl I have authority, which I should not scruple to exercise, to put him to death at once, but that I thought it better to give him the chance of this investigation."

"Young man," said the military preacher, addressing Hotham in a solemn tone, "if you give a man in bonds a chance, it should be a fair one. Such has not been afforded the prisoner. Why did you tear the paper? Why do you now refuse to confront him with the witness he calls? and if that witness be too ill, why not wait till he be well, as he requires? why not, if not to doom him to death at your pleasure? I will go no farther in this. I wash my hands of this blood."

"Well, then, we will put it to the vote!" cried Colonel Hotham, fiercely; "and look to yourself, Captain Marsh. He that puts his hand to the plough must not turn back. Look to yourself, I say."

"I will!" replied the old officer of the train-bands; "and I am not to be frightened from a righteous course by hard words or frowning brows. I fear not what man can do unto me."

"Pshaw!" cried Colonel Hotham, turning away. "Your verdict, sir, upon these two men. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty," said the Londoner, to whom he spoke, without a moment's pause.

"Guilty," said the other on the colonel's left, answering a mere look.

"I doubt," replied Captain Marden of the train-bands, when Hotham turned to him.

"But I do not," rejoined that officer, "and I say guilty too; so there are three voices against two. They are condemned. Take them hence to the water side, call out a file of men, and the rest as yesterday. I spare you the rope, Lord Beverley, in consideration of your rank. You shall die as a soldier."

"And you as a murderer!" shouted Barecolt, rushing towards him so suddenly that he caught him by the throat with both hands before any one could interpose.

The two Parliamentary officers drew their swords; the guards were rushing up from the door; but under the strong pressure of Barecolt's fingers Colonel Hotham was turning black in the face, and might have been strangled before he could be delivered, when suddenly a voice

was heard exclaiming, "Halt! Not a man stir Guard the door!" and all was silence. Captain Barecolt slightly relaxed his grasp, the Parliamentary officers drew back, and Sir John Hotham, with an excited, angry countenance, and evidently in great pain, walked up the room, and took a place at the head of the table.

"What is all this?" he demanded; "unloose my son, sir. What is the meaning of this, Colonel Hotham?"

"Pardil! I will unloose him, now you be come, governor," replied Barecolt, taking away his hands and drawing back; "but, begar, if you have not come, he be strangle."

Colonel Hotham sank in a chair, gasping for breath, and one of the officers from London took upon him to reply, "This is a court-martial, Sir John, summoned to try—"

"And by whose authority?" demanded the governor, fiercely. "Who dares to summon a court-martial in Hull but myself?"

"But you were ill, sir," replied the officer, "and Colonel Hotham judged it expedient to summon us."

"He did, did he?" cried the governor. "Colonel Hotham, give up your sword. You are under arrest. Remove him, guards. Take him away. This is no court; all its proceedings are illegal, and shall be dealt with. Gentlemen, you are dismissed. Away! We have had too much of you."

Some of those present were inclined to remonstrate; but the old man, who had alone interfered in behalf of the earl, said aloud, "You are quite right, Sir John. The court and all its proceedings were illegal and iniquitous."

Colonel Hotham, too, strove to make himself heard, but the governor exclaimed, in a loud and angry tone, "Away! Have I not said it? Guard, clear the room, and take that young man away. Place a sentry at his chamber door. He is under arrest."

Sir John Hotham had not come alone, for the farther end of the hall displayed a considerable party of the train-bands, and muttering some very unpleasant observations on his father's conduct, Colonel Hotham was removed, while the rest of the body, whom he had chosen to constitute a court-martial, retired slowly and sheepishly, leaving the governor with the two prisoners, Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, and a party of the guard.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SIR JOHN HOTHAM gazed alternately at Lord Beverley, Captain Barecolt, and Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, with not a little of irascibility, which is common in the complaint from which he was suffering, still evident in his countenance, and ready to fall upon any one who said a word to provoke his wrath. As several of the guard were in the room, Lord Beverley thought it most prudent to remain perfectly silent; and the governor at length began the conversation by exclaiming, "And who the devil is this fellow?" at the same time he pointed to Mr. Dry, with no very placable looks.

"I am a poor God-fearing man, worshipful sir," began the personage of whom he spoke; but Captain Barecolt interrupted him before he could say any more.

"He is none of de greatest rogues in all Christ-

"endom," he said, turning to the governor. "I know he very well. He beats the king, he beats de Parliament, he beats everybody. He be vone grand imposture."

"The devil he is," exclaimed the governor. "Is this true, sir?" and turning, he looked to Lord Beverley for an answer.

"Perfectly, Sir John," replied the earl: "I have heard a good deal of this gentleman from various quarters, and I know that he carried off a young lady from her friends and brought her hither to Hull, with very sinister views indeed."

Mr. Dry held up his hands and showed the whites of his eyes, but the governor exclaimed, "Ay, by —," and he added a very unsanctified oath. "I recollect the scoundrel now. He came here two or three days ago; he came here making a great noise about this girl, and asking for warrants, and I know not what. He declared that she was his ward. Take him by the ears, fellows, and turn him out of the town. We want no such vagabonds among us."

"I warn you, worshipful sir, I warn you," cried Mr. Dry, while two of the guards took him by the arms, "that these are two malignants, and prelate conspirators. Did not false witnesses rise up against—"

"A way with him!" shouted Sir John Hotham, "away with him; and if he continues to bawl, put him in the stocks, and let him bawl there."

The soldiers removed Mr. Dry, of Longoaken, without farther resistance, for he, like Erasmus, was not of the stuff from which they make martyrs, and the name of the stocks had a great effect upon him. The governor then directed the rest of the soldiers to quit the room, but to wait in the passage without, adding, "I will examine into the case of these gentlemen myself."

As soon as the room was cleared, he turned to the Earl of Beverley, saying, "This is an unfortunate affair, my lord; you see how things go. What can I do?"

"Why, methinks, Sir John," rejoined the earl, approaching the governor and speaking in a whisper, "the only thing for you to do is to throw open the gates at once to his majesty's forces and declare your loyalty. A few hours would bring the army hither."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Hotham, aloud, with an impatient look. "You know not what you talk of, sir. Everything is changed since you were here. The place is full of people sent down from the Parliament. It will be as much as I can do to get you safely out, and unless my son had given me cause to shut him up, I could not even do that. He cannot be kept in long, however, for ere noon I shall have remonstrances enow; and your only safety is in immediate departure. You shall have a new pass without delay; and then the sooner your back is turned on Hull, the better."

"But what shall I say to the king?" demanded the earl, willing to make one more effort for the grand object of his coming: "he fully expects—"

"Expects what cannot be done!" exclaimed the governor, impatiently. "Give my humble duty to his majesty, and say I will lose no opportunity to do him service, but that I am no longer master in Hull. Tell him he had better withdraw his troops as soon as may be, for if they come before the walls, the cannon must be fired upon them, which I would fain avoid. But say, sir, say that my heart is with him, and that it is against my will I close the gates."

As he spoke, he drew the inkstand nearer to him and wrote a fresh pass for the earl, looking up and saying, "But I will send people with you to see you clear of the gates. On my life, I never know what contempt these men will show to my orders; and it is as likely as not that they would stop you and hang you in the streets, if you had not a guard."

"Begar, den de sooner we wish dem good morning de better," cried Captain Barecoll.

"But, Sir John, there is another matter," said Lord Beverley, as the governor put his signature to the paper. "You have here in bonds my friend, and the king's faithful servant, Colonel Ashburnham: I do beseech you, for my sake, and for your loyalty's sake, set him free also."

"Nay, I know not how that may be," replied Sir John Hotham: "the Parliament have written to my son, I hear, to send him up to Westminster."

"But your son is not governor of Hull," answered the earl. "If the mandate come to him, not you, there can be no cause why you should know or recognise it. If you miss the opportunity of sending him away with us, you may regret it when you have no longer the power to show such an act of courtesy."

"True, true," replied Sir John Hotham: "I have promised him his freedom, and he shall have it if the devil himself keep the gates. Stay here a minute, stay here," and, rising from his chair, he limped away, and left Captain Barecoll and the earl below, in the hall.

A few minutes passed in explanation between the two Cavaliers; but then they began to be somewhat impatient for the governor's return, as they were but too well aware that their situation was still full of danger and difficulty. Minutes after minute passed, however, without his coming, and a considerable degree of noise in the house, the moving about of many feet, and a good deal of bustle and confusion, did not tend to quiet their apprehensions.

"By Heaven, my lord," cried Barecoll, "I fear your lordship has gone farther than that worthy gentleman of old times, who sacrificed himself for his friend; for I've a great notion that you have sacrificed me also for this good colonel, who was the original cause of all our mishap. I would have let him take his chance and got out as he could."

But while the renowned captain was thus remonstrating, the door again opened, and Sir John Hotham reappeared, followed by Colonel Ashburnham. "Quick! quick!" cried the governor: "you must lose no more time, but all get away together. Here is already a deputation to remonstrate, but I have shut the fellows up in a room above, and they shall wait long enough before they see me."

"But we must provide a horse for my good friend here," said Lord Beverley, who was asking Ashburnham by the hand.

"That's all done, that's all done," said Sir John Hotham. "His horse and yours are both waiting in the court, and a party of men to see you safe out of the town, and to ensure that you speak with no one as you go. We must trust you as enemies, my lord, though we could wish you were friends."

"But my horse," cried the renowned Captain Barecoll; "I have left him at the inn."

This intelligence somewhat discomposed Sir John Hotham, but it was at length determined that Barecoll should have a fresh pass made out

in his own name, and should be left with this security to find his way out of Hull as best he might; and the whole party issuing forth into the court, left Sir John Holham to account for his conduct in the matter of their liberation to the artisans of the Parliament in the town. In taking leave of him, also, we need only remind the reader that these very events not long afterward rought his head to the block.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PARTIES of the Royalist army were arriving in every direction round Hull, and from time to time saker and falconet, and such other artillery as the garrison had been able to muster on the walls, were discharged at the adventurous cavaliers who appeared too near, when Mr. Dry, of Longoaken, having been permitted by the ward who had him in charge to gather his baggage hastily together at the Swan, and to saddle his horse, issued forth from the gates, leaving the orse on which Arrah Neil had ridden thither behind him in the hands of Mrs. White, in part payment of his bill. Not that Mr. Dry had come unprovided with the needful means of meeting any expenses he might incur; far from it, for he was a wealthy man, and for many years had never known what even temporary want is; but he loved barter, and had generally gained by it, and though he was indeed obliged to dispose of the sack at a loss to the good landlady, yet that loss, he contrived it, was less than would have been incurred by any other process.

However, when he stood without the gates and saw them closed behind him; when he beheld wherever he turned some body of horse or foot at the distance of less than a mile; and more than all, when he heard a cannon boom over his head from above, the heart of Mr. Dry, of Longoaken, sunk, and he felt a degree of trepidation he had never known in life before. What to do he could not tell; but after much deliberation he resolved to stay where he was till the Royalist troops were withdrawn, calculating justly that they would not approach so near as to do him any harm, and that the troops within would not see forth while the others were in sight.

One point, indeed, he did not foresee. The art of Beverley and Colonel Ashburnham had issued out while he was at the inn; but the respectable Captain Barecolt was still behind, and the evil fate of Mr. Dry would have it, just as he had remained under shelter of the archway for one hour and a quarter by the great ock, holding his horse by the bridle all the time, as the gate behind him suddenly began to clank and rattle in the painful operation of giving exit to that great hero. Mr. Dry started up and looked behind him, lifting his foot towards the stirrup at the same moment; and as soon as he beheld Captain Barecolt, he scrambled into the saddle as well as he could; but, alas! that renowned officer was already mounted, and Mr. Dry had to perform an operation which was difficult to him. He had got his left foot in the stirrup; he swung himself up into the saddle; but before his right foot could find its place of repose (and Mr. Dry did not venture to spur on till it had) the gates were closed behind Captain Barecolt, and he himself by the Puritan's side.

"Ha, ha! old Drybones," said that officer, "have I caught thee at length?"

"What want you with me, man of Belial?" demanded the master of Longoaken, with the cat-in-a-corner courage of despair. "Get you gone upon your way, and let honest men than yourself follow theirs."

"Nay, good faith," answered Barecolt, stretching out his left hand and grasping Mr. Dry's rein, "I always love that better men than myself should bear me company; and such is to be thy fate, oh Dry; so do not think to escape it, for as sure as my name is de Capitaine Jersval, if you attempt any one of all those cunning tricks which you so well know how to practise, I will slit your weasand incontinent. It matters not two straws to me whether I have you alive or dead, but have your corpus I will, as the prisoner of my bow and spur, as you would call it. Come, use your spurs, or I must spur your beast for you. You see that party of honest Cavaliers there on the hill—terrible malignants every one of them, that would have a pleasure in roasting you by a slow fire like an old tough goose, and basting you with those strong waters that you love so well. To them we are going, so spur on with the alacrity which your good luck deserves—what, you will not? Oh, then, I must;" and, drawing his sword, he pricked Mr. Dry's horse so close to that worthy gentleman's thigh that he started and rose in the stirrups.

The poor beast darted on in an instant, and in so doing shook Mr. Dry a good deal; but whether the concussion elicited a brilliant thought from his brain or not, he exclaimed immediately after, "Hark ye, Captain Barecolt, I have a word for you. Do not let us ride so fast. I have an offer to make. Listen a moment."

Mr. Dry understood the peculiar genius of captain to which Barecolt belonged, but he did not understand the exact variety. He knew that, with most adventurous soldiers like himself, the food for which they hungered was gold. Drink might do much: dice might do much: fair ladies might do more; but gold, gold was paramount; an attraction not to be resisted. Mr. Dry loved gold too, and overvalued its importance; but he felt a strong internal conviction that if carried at once to the quarters of Lord Walton, life, which was the grand means of getting and enjoying gold, would be of a very short duration. He saw a noose dangling from a cross-tree before his eyes, and he wisely calculated that it would be better to sacrifice some portion of the less valuable commodity to save the more valuable, and therefore he prepared to tempt his companion's cupidity—not without a faint hope of cheating him after all—but with the resolution of giving anything that might save his life.

A sudden thought, too, had struck Captain Barecolt, which he proceeded to follow out, as will be seen presently; but its first effect was to make him draw in his rein, and also check the horse of Mr. Dry, over which he exercised supreme command; and as he did so, he said in a dry and bantering tone, "Well, worshipful Master Dry, speak what you have to speak; as you will not have leisure to use your tongue much more on earth, it would be hard to deny you a few words. You are going to the gallows, Mr. Dry, you are going to the gallows; and though I cannot promise that you shall swing as high as Haman, yet you shall have as decent an execution as time and circumstances permit, and plenty of room for your feet."

"Nay," said Dry, with a sort of sobbing sigh, "you would not be so barbarous—so unchristian."

especially when I am willing to pay ransom. Listen, captain, listen, noble Captain Barecolt; if you will not take me and put me in the hands of yonder men of Belial, I will—I will go as far as a hundred pounds."

"Men of Belial, sirrah!" cried Barecolt, turning upon him fiercely. "How dare you call his majesty's forces men of Belial. That very word shall cost you five hundred pounds if you would save your life."

Though the captain's words were fierce, yet they served to show that he was not quite inaccessible; and Mr. Dry began at once to haggle about his ransom; but Barecolt showed himself as hard a bargain as he was himself; and, as he perceived that every step they took in advance increased the trepidation of the worthy man of Longsoaken, he used the screw thus afforded him to squeeze Mr. Dry very painfully. Now he pushed on his horse, now he slackened his pace, now he pointed out a party of Cavaliers approaching very near; and discovering exactly what Mr. Dry had upon his person, he took care to make his demand much more, in order that he might have the opportunity of keeping him in his hands till the sum was paid, which was, indeed, the principal object he had in view. Some difficulties totally independent of Mr. Dry's natural reluctance to part with his money, even to save his life, occurred in the course of the negotiation. Barecolt was well aware, from what he had seen of the king's conduct, that if the prisoner were taken to the camp, instead of mounting a ladder, he would most likely regain his liberty very speedily; and the worthy Puritan, on the contrary, was terrified at the very thought of approaching the royal quarters, his consciousness of offences, grave and manifold, presenting instant death to his imagination as the only result. What, then, was to be done with him while he remained in the custody of Captain Barecolt? That valiant gentleman proposed that he should assume a false name, and pass as a friend of his in the camp; but Mr. Dry, remembering that he was known to many in Lord Walton's troop, rejected this idea at once, as totally inconsistent with his own safety. "You might as well hang me at once!" he said.

"That might be pleasant enough," answered Barecolt, "were it not that you have only a hundred and fifteen pounds about you, Master Dry. However, let me see, if we take this little hollow way to the left, methinks it will lead us to the hamlet just below the old church. I could stow you away in that building, as a young friend of mine was once served by some of your people, while I send for some of my own men to keep guard over you, while I go and report myself."

"No, not there! not there!" cried he of Longsoaken, turning paler than ever. "No, no; but there is an ale-house farther on, where we could find accommodation. They are good and pious people there."

"For which reason I will have nothing to do with them," answered the profane captain. "No; but I know of a tavern just a mile from Beverley, where you can be lodged safely, Master Dry; and as, if you are taken and hanged, I lose five hundred good pounds, you may be quite sure that I will take as much pains to keep your neck out of the halter as I will to guard against your escape. We will talk about the means of getting the money from Bishop's Merton hereafter; so now come on quick; we shall turn the flank of that party we see upon the hill in five minutes,

without their seeing us, if we keep in the hollow way; and should we meet any stragglers, you must either keep a silent tongue in your head, or curse and swear like a trooper."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mr. Dry, turning up his eyes.

"Pough!" cried Captain Barecolt, "I know you would trample on the cross, as the Dutchmen do in Japan, to save your life;" and with the avowal of this undeniable fact, he hurried forward, nor drew a rein till they reached the village and the inn which he had mentioned.

They found three or four of the inferior followers of the court in possession of the public house; but though two of them were known to the politic captain, they were not persons whom he chose to trust, and conveying Mr. Dry to an upper room, he bestowed a small piece of silver upon one of the boys of the place to run up to Beverley and bring down one Corporal Curtis from his troop. In the mean while, he informed Mr. Dry that it would be as well if he would give up into his secure keeping, to be duly accounted for at an after period, all his worldly goods and chattels, including his tawny sheathed steel-mounted sword; and though that worshipful person submitted with but an ill grace to the law of necessity, the pitiless captain employed very searching measures to ascertain that he retained nothing either on his person or in his saddle-bags but a decent change of apparel. When this was done, as Corporal Curtis had not yet appeared, Captain Barecolt called for a bottle of good wine, the cost of which he disbursed from Mr. Dry's stores, noting it carefully down in a small, dirty memorandum-book, as he sagely remarked that he should have to reckon with that gentleman when they parted. The last cup was in the pottle-pot, and the gallant officer was seriously thinking of calling for more, when a tall, athletic man was ushered in, bearing some resemblance to Barecolt himself, to whose hands the captain consigned Mr. Dry, with a positive and loud injunction not to lose sight of him even for a moment, and to shoot him through the head if he attempted to escape.

Corporal Curtis promised to obey, saying dryly, with a nod at their companion, that he remembered the march from Bishop's Merton; and Barecolt, leaving him in such good hands, mounted his horse and rode off to Beverley. He was kept there nearly an hour before he could obtain a private audience of Lord Walton; but at the end of that time, he was closeted with the young nobleman for a long time, and when their conference was at an end, they walked away together to the quarters of Major Randal, where another long private conversation took place. What passed might be difficult as well as audacious to tell; but in the end, towards five o'clock of the afternoon, Captain Barecolt returned in the village where he had left his captive, accompanied by two stout troopers selected by himself from his own troop; and mounting to the chamber of Mr. Dry, he announced to him, in a tone that admitted no reply, that he must mount and accompany him at once towards Bishop's Merton.

"I have determined, most worshipful sir," he said, as soon as he sent Corporal Curtis out of the room, "to see you safe on your way till we are within half a day's march of Longsoaken. You will then have the goodness to give an order for the payment of your ransom to one of my friends, who will rejoin us when he has received it, and then I will set you free."

"How do I know you will do that?" demanded Dry, of Longsoaken, in a sullen tone.

"By making use of your common sense, Mr. Dry," replied Captain Barecolt. "Could I not hang you now, if I like it? Can I not hang you now, if it pleases me? Will I not hang you now, if you affect to doubt the honour of a gentleman and a soldier? So no more on that score, but descend, mount, and march, as you needs must."

There was no remedy, and Mr. Dry obeyed, with vague hopes, indeed, of making his escape by some fortunate accident on the way. He argued that, in the distracted state of the country, it was barely possible for Captain Barecolt to pass across a great part of England without either encountering some force of the opposite party, or pausing in some town which had espoused the Parliamentary cause; and he believed that in either case his liberation must take place. But he little knew the forethought of that great strategic mind. Barecolt had furnished himself with correct information regarding the views and feelings of all the places he had to pass, and, instead of taking his way by Coventry and Worcester, he led his little troop direct to Nottingham, Derby, and Shrewsbury, almost in the same course that the king followed shortly after; and at every halting-place Mr. Dry found himself so strictly watched that his hopes declined from hour to hour. He was never left alone, even for a moment, Captain Barecolt himself, or one of the three soldiers who accompanied him, remaining with him night and day. The only chance that seemed left was in meeting with some friends as the party approached Bishop's Merton; but when Mr. Dry remembered that he was totally unarmed, his heart, never the most firm and daring, fell inconceivably at the thought of a struggle; and the sanguinary and ferocious conversation of his captor, the list of slain that his arm had sent to their long account, the bloody battles he had seen, and the dire deeds he had done, made him tremble for the result of any attempt to escape.

At length familiar objects began to greet the eyes of Mr. Dry. He saw places and things which he had often seen before, and knew that he must be within one day's journey of Bishop's Merton; and the very feeling revived, in some degree, his fainting courage. "Surely," he thought, "the people here must have retained their devotion to the cause." But, alas! as he rode one morning into a town where he had often bought and sold, he beheld a party of Lord Hertford's horse sitting jesting with the girls in the market-place; and the conversation which he heard as he went along showed him that times had changed, and people had changed with them.

On leading up, as had been the invariable custom since they set out, to a high room in the inn, Captain Barecolt, with a stern tone and countenance, told Corporal Curtis to set a soldier at the door, and to suffer no one to enter. Then waving his captive to a seat, he took a stool opposite, and after a solemn pause addressed him thus: "Now, worshipful Master Dry, doubtless you have been puzzling the small wits that God has given you to discover how it happens that an officer like myself, high in the king's confidence, has been induced to traverse so great an extent of country solely for the purpose of receiving from a mechanical and trading individual like yourself the pitiful sum of five hundred pounds, which might have been transmitted

by various other means; and it is but fitting that you should know the cause. I and other persons of high rank and station have been made acquainted how, on the death of a poor old man, one Sergeant Neil, you rifled his cottage, and possessed yourself, among other things, of sundry papers appertaining to a young lady who, for some years, has gone under the name of Arrah Neil, and was supposed to be his grand-daughter. Don't interrupt me. Having brought you thus far, it is necessary to tell you that, besides an order upon some wealthy man at Bishop's Merton for the five hundred pounds before mentioned, which I shall send on by one of my troopers, it is necessary to your safety and liberation that you should furnish Corporal Curtis with an exact statement of where the said papers are to be found in your house at Longsoaken, and with an order to your people there to aid and assist my said corporal in searching for and finding those documents, expressly stating that you have immediate need of them—don't interrupt me—as, indeed, is the exact truth, for you must know that I have authority, under the hand of competent persons, in case you should show any reluctance to deliver up property belonging to other people, which you have stolen, to hang you upon the branch of a convenient tree in Wilbury wood, as one taken in arms in open rebellion, otherwise in flagrant delict, worshipful Master Dry. While dinner is getting ready, therefore, you will be good enough to think deliberately over the particulars, and make up your mind as to whether you will like the state of suspense at which I have hinted better than a surrender of that which is not yours."

The varieties of hue which Mr. Dry's countenance had assumed while he listened to this long oration cannot be described here; for the very attempt would require us to go through almost every shade that ever graced a painter's pallet. Captain Barecolt had three times told him not to interrupt; but it was a very unnecessary caution, as that worthy gentleman was far too much confounded and thunderstruck to be able to utter a word; and when at length his captor rose, and going to the door, conversed with the soldier for a few minutes, he remained in a state of impotent rage, bitterness, and disappointment, which had the curious effect of making him bite his under lip wellnigh through with his teeth.

Captain Barecolt was inexorable, however; the dinner was served; and Mr. Dry, though he could with difficulty be brought to a mouthful, drank a good deal. The dinner was over, and Captain Barecolt called for writing materials, which were laid before the unfortunate Mr. Dry. He paused and his hand shook; but the captain was wonderfully calm and composed. He enjoyed the operation very much. "First, if you please, worshipful Master Dry," he said, "the order on some responsible citizen of Bishop's Merton for five hundred pounds, to be paid at sight; and you will be good enough to eschew the word ransom, putting in that it is for your private necessities."

Mr. Dry wrote as he was directed, and then, Captain Barecolt having examined the paper, placed another sheet before him, saying, "Now for the order to your steward, housekeeper, and all other of your people at Longsoaken to aid and assist Mr. Curtis—eschew the word corporal, and merely style him your friend to—search for, &c., &c., &c."

Mr. Dry again paused, and Captain Barecolt

added, "Remember, I do not press you. I have orders not to press you. If you sign, well; we will go on to a certain cove you know of in Wilbury wood, where I will keep you company till my men return, and, as soon as I find that all that is required comes safe to hand, I will instantly set you free without let or hindrance. But if you refuse to sign, I am not to press you—no, not in the least: I am only to hang you in Wilbury wood, as a terror to all offenders. No, I do not press you in the least, Mr. Dry. Act as in your judgment you shall think expedient."

Mr. Dry took the pen once more, and with a wavering and uncertain hand wrote down the order very nearly in the terms which Captain Barecolt had dictated. He then stopped a moment, dipped the pen in the ink, gazed in the officer's face, and then added his name.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cried Captain Barecolt, taking the paper with a mocking laugh. "Here is a man who prefers giving up things that don't belong to him, to being hanged in a nice cool wood. What an extraordinary taste!" And walking up to the door, he put his head out, saying, "Saddle the horses."

"Devil!" cried Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, setting his teeth hard; and at the same time, by a rapid but silent movement, he drew a long, sharp-pointed knife off the table, and hastily put it in his pocket.

"Come, Mr. Dry," said Barecolt, turning round, "we shall soon part, if your people obey your orders, and your correspondent pays the money. So we may as well have another tankard to drink to our next merry meeting. It will make but a small item in your bill. Hillo, there! Bring another tankard, and mind it be of the best."

But when the wine came, Mr. Dry refused to drink, saying, sullenly, he had had enough to quench his thirst for a week. Captain Barecolt laughed again, for the writhing of his victim was pleasant to him; and taking up the large jug of wine, he replied, "We have not had you long enough among us, Mr. Dry. You should really bear us company a little longer, to learn to drink deep. This is the way a true soldier discusses a stoup of good Bordeaux," and setting the brim to his lips, he never took it away till the tankard was empty.

"Now to horse, to horse!" he cried, and making Mr. Dry go down and mount before him, he sprang lightly upon horseback, seeming all the more brisk and active for his liquor.

After some little shaking of hands and bidding good-by between Barecolt and his own and the troopers of Lord Hertford in the streets, the captain's little party rode out of the town, and were soon in the midst of fields and lanes again. Then came a wide, bare common, extending for three or four miles on every side, and as they crossed it, appeared a large old wood lying straight before them, and falling into large waves of brown foliage, with misty dells between.

"Ay, there is old Wilbury wood, Master Dry," said Captain Barecolt. "You know it well, I dare say."

"You seem to know it well too," answered the Puritan, eying him askance.

"To be sure I do," replied the renowned captain; "and while the men are gone upon their errand, I will tell you how. Keep your curiosity cool till then, Master Dry, and you shall be satisfied."

"I have no curiosity about it," growled the Puritan.

"Well, then, you shall hear, whether you have curiosity or not," answered the captain; and on they rode, following a somewhat lonely and unfrequented path into the heart of the wood. The old trees fell round them in wild groups and strange, fantastic forms, the horses bounded away into the underwood, and the squirrels, crossing the path, ran gayly up the trees, while a jay flew on before and scolded them from a bough overhead.

"I think this should be the turning," said the gallant captain, at length. "Does not this lead to the cave, Master Dry?"

"Seek it yourself, if you want it," answered his companion.

"You are discourteous, knave," said Barecolt, giving him a blow on the ribs that made the worthy gentleman's breath come short. "Learn to be civil to your betters;" and turning his horse up the path, at the mouth of which he had stopped, he led his little party with unerring sagacity to a high rocky promontory in the wood, in the base of which appeared a hollow some ten or twelve feet deep. He then dismounted, and made Mr. Dry do the same, and seeing him safely lodged in the cave, he gave one of the papers to Corporal Curtis, saying, "Take Jones with you, and do as I told you, corporal. Avoid the town, and be back before dark; for if they do not give up the papers, I shall want you to help to hang our friend there."

His back was turned to Master Dry, and as he uttered these words aloud, he winked upon the corporal significantly with one small eye.

"They will obey my order!" said Dry.

"I trust they will!" rejoined Barecolt, solemnly. "You, Jones, take this to Bishop's Merton, and get the money. You may tell Master Winkfield, on whom it is drawn, that Master Dry wants it sadly. So he does, poor man! Look about the town, too, before you return, and see what is going on. I heard this morning that they are turning loyal; and if so, I may honour them with a visit myself some day."

The men rode away, and Captain Barecolt, after having secured the horses to two trees, took his pistols from the saddle, and rejoined his prisoner in the cave. There seating himself on the ground, with his long legs stretched out across the mouth of the excavation, he waved Mr. Dry, with a commanding air, to seat himself also. It was easy to perceive that Captain Barecolt had been rendered somewhat more grand in his own opinion by the last stoup of wine which he had tossed off with no more ceremony than if it had been a gill, and his captive, feeling that it might be dangerous to oppose him even in a trifle, instantly bent his hocks to the ground, being at the same time somewhat weary with a ride of more than thirty miles that morning.

Captain Barecolt first began by examining the priming of his pistols, the muzzles of which every now and then swept Mr. Dry's person in a manner that made him very uncomfortable; but when this operation was finished, and the pistols replaced in his belt, the Royalist officer turned his looks upon Mr. Dry with a sort of compassionate contempt that was extremely irritating. "Ah, Master Dry, Master Dry," he said, "told you and I know this wood very well. You often used to come here when you were an apprentice boy with old Nicholas Cobalter; and many a pound of sugar and salt have you hkl away in

that corner, just behind where you are now sitting; many an ounce of pepper have you laid in the nook just over your head, till you could dispose of your piffings."

Mr. Dry said nothing, but gazed at Captain Barecolt from under his bent brows with a look of hatred and fear, such as might be supposed to pass over his countenance if he had seen the infernal spirit.

"Ay," continued the officer, in a somewhat maudlin and sentimental tone, "those were pleasant days, Mr. Dry, especially when you used to take a walk in this wood with buxoin Mrs. Cobalter, when her husband went to London town, and she used to vow, if ever he died, you should be her second, because you were tender of her failings, and connived at her dealing with the pottle-pot more freely than her husband liked."

"And who the devil are you?" cried Mr. Dry, furiously, forgetting all his sanctity in the irritating state of apprehension and astonishment to which he was reduced.

"Ay, those were merry times, Master Dry," continued Barecolt, without noticing his intemperate question, and fixing one eye upon Mr. Dry's face, while the other rolled vacantly round the cave, as if searching for memories or ideas. "Yes, Master Dry, no one would have thought to see you the master of Longsoaken in those days. But it all came of the widow, and your stepping, by her help, into all that old Cobalter left—fair or foul, Master Dry, it matters not; you got it, and that made a man of you."

"And who, in the fiend's name, are you?" demanded the Puritan, almost springing at his throat.

"I will tell you, Ezekiel Dry," answered Barecolt, bending forward, and gazing sternly in his face. "I will tell you. I am Daniel Cobalter—ay, little Daniel, the old man's only nephew—his brother's son—whom you cheated, with the widow's aid, of his uncle's inheritance, and left to go out into the world with five crown pieces and a stout heart; and now that I have you here, face to face, in Wilbury wood, what have you to say why I should not blow your brains out for all that you have done to me and mine?"

Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, shrunk into nothing, while Barecolt continued to gaze upon him sternly, as if he would have eat him alive. A moment after, however, the gallant captain's face relaxed its awful frown, and with a withering and contemptuous smile he went on. "But set your mind at ease, worm. You are safe in my scorn. I have done better for myself than if I had been tied down to a mechanical life. But take warning by what has happened, and do not let me catch you any more at these same tricks, or I will put my boot heel upon your head, and tread your brains out like a viper's. There, sit there, and be silent till the men come back; for if I see you move, or hear you speak, it will raise choler in me."

The gallant captain then rose, and stood for a minute in the mouth of the cave, and then returned again and seated himself, looking at Dry with a sneering smile. "Now art thou hammering thy poor thin brains to find how Daniel Cobalter has become a Captain Barecolt; but if thou twistest the letters into proper form, thou wilt find that I have not taken one from any man's name but my own. That is no robbery, Dry!"

"Nay, I see! I see!" said the Puritan.

"Ay, dost thou so?" rejoined Barecolt.

"Then see and be silent," and he leaned his head upon his hand and gazed forth from the mouth of the cave. Presently Captain Barecolt's head nodded, and his breath came somewhat heavily. Dry, of Longsoaken, gazed at him with his small eyes full of fierce and baleful light. But his face did not grow red or heated with the angry passion that was evidently working within him. On the contrary, it was as white as that of a corpse. "Ruin!" he muttered in a low voice to himself: "Ruin!" And at the same time he put his right hand in his pocket, where he had concealed the knife.

But Captain Barecolt suddenly raised his head. "You moved!" he said, sternly.

"It was but for my ease," answered Dry, in a whispering tone; "this ground is very hard."

"Sit still," rejoined the captain, frowning, and then resumed the same attitude. In two or three minutes he breathed hard again; and then he snored, for he had drank much wine and ridden far. For a few minutes Mr. Dry thought he was feigning sleep, and yet it seemed very like reality—sound, heavy, dull.

"It must be soon, or not at all," he thought to himself; "the other man may soon be back. Soft, I will try him;" and rising, he affected to look out of the mouth of the cave. Captain Barecolt slept on.

Ezekiel Dry trembled very much; but he quietly put his hand once more into his pocket, and drew forth the knife. He grasped it tight, and took a step forward to the sleeping man's side. Barecolt, accustomed to watch, started, and was rising; but ere he could gain his feet, the blow descended on his right breast, and leaving the knife behind, Dry darted out of the cave.

The blood gushed forth in a stream; but with a quick and firm hand, Barecolt drew a pistol from his belt, cocked it, took a step forward, levelled, and fired. Dry, of Longsoaken, sprung up a foot from the ground, and fell heavily upon the forest grass, with his blood and brains scattered round.

"Ha!" cried Barecolt. "Ha, Master Dry. But I feel marvellous faint—very faint; I will sit down;" and resuming his seat, he leaned back, while his face became as pale as ashes, and the pistol fell from his hand.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE attempt upon Hull had been abandoned, and, mortified and desponding, Charles I. had quitted Beverley and pursued his march through the land. The Earl of Essex lay in force at Nottingham, but no show of energy announced at this time the successes which the Parliamentary parties were ultimately to obtain. The mightier spirits had not yet risen from the depth, and the ostensible engines with which faction worked were, as usual, the cunning artifice, the well-told lie, the exaggerated grievance, the suppressed truth, the dark insinuation, by which large classes, if not whole nations, may be stirred up either for good or evil. There was activity in all the small and petty arts of agitation, there was activity in those courses which prepare the way for greater things; but in that which was to decide all, arms, tardiness, if not sloth, was alone apparent.

It is strange, in reviewing all great habitual convulsions, to remark how petty are the events

and how small are really the men by which great success is obtained, though insignificant incidents swell into importance by their mass, and mean characters gain a reflected sublimity from the vastness of the results by which their deeds are followed. Even individual vices and weaknesses acquire a certain grandeur under the magnifying power of important epochs, and from the uses to which they are turned; and the hypocrisy of Cromwell, and the bombast of Napoleon, which would have excited little but contempt in less prominent persons, appear in a degree sublime from being displayed on a wider stage, and employed as means to a mighty end.

We are too apt to judge of efforts by results, as of people by their success, noticing but little, in the application of men's characters—one of the chief elements which distinguish the great from the little—the objects which they proposed to themselves, and in our judgment of their skill, taking into small account the difficulties that opposed and the facilities that favoured the accomplishment of their designs; and it is curious to remark that the revolutions which have carried great usurpers into power have always raised the ambitious and left the patriotic behind, as if human selfishness were the only motive which can ensure that continuity of effort and unity of purpose which alone can command success among the struggles of diverse factions, and the development of infinitely varied opinions. The Earl of Essex was a higher-minded man than Cromwell, but he had doubts and hesitations which Cromwell's ambition would not entertain, and there can be but little doubt that he was unwilling to strike the first irrevocable blow against an army commanded by his sovereign in person. Doubtless he fancied, as many did, that the small force collected tardily by a monarch, without supplies, would speedily melt away, and leave Charles, of sheer necessity, to accept any terms that the Parliament chose to dictate; but whatever was the cause, the king was permitted unopposed to march to Shrewsbury, while the Parliamentary forces lay inactive at Northampton. The reception given to the monarch in the town was such as to encourage high hopes in all, and as Wales was rising in his favour, it was judged expedient that Charles should visit the principality in person while the army recruited itself on the banks of the Severn, and every effort was made to obtain a supply of arms and money. Provisions, indeed, were abundant, the Royalist troops were regularly paid, greater order and more perfect discipline were maintained than had yet been observed in the army, and a state of calm and cheerful enjoyment reigned in the good old town, which is but too seldom known in civil war.

Such was the state of things, when one evening, a little before sunset, just after the king had left Shrewsbury for Wales, two persons, a gentleman and lady, wandered along through the fields on the banks of the river, full once more of happy dreams and hopes of bright hours to come. Lord Beverley gazed down into his fair companion's eyes as she lifted her sunny look towards his fine expressive face, and he saw in those two wells of light the deep pure love of which he had so often dreamed; while Annie Walton, in the countenance of him who gazed with such fond thoughtfulness upon her, read the intense and passionate tenderness which only can satisfy the heart and teach the spirit of woman to repose with calm security on the love of her future hus-

band. It is too late in the tale either to paint the feelings which were in the hearts of each at that moment, or to tell the words of dear affection that they spoke; the thrill of mutual affection; the trembling flutter of her heart as she thought of the near-approaching hour; the glad eagerness of his to call her his own beyond the power of fate; the visions of future joy and the long vistas of happy years which the warm imagination of each presented, not the less bright and sparkling because on her side as on his, though from different causes, vague clouds and indistinct shadows hung over parts of the scene which fancy painted. Come what might, they were in a few days to be united, and that was enough for the hour.

They had been talking long over their plans and prospects; the old house of Lougour Hall was to be their abode for the next three weeks; their marriage was to be as private and quiet as even Annie Walton's heart could desire, and the circumstances of the times gave fair excuse for cutting off all ceremonies and casting away all formal delays. Of three weeks they thought themselves secure, and within that little space was bounded all the real lifetime of their hopes. Beyond—what was beyond? Who could say! and yet they dreamed of days long after, and fancy looked over the prison walls of the present, and told them of fair scenes and glowing landscapes which only her eye could descry.

"I could have wished," said Annie Walton, after a pause, "that Charles could have been married on the same day."

The earl smiled. "Then you see it now, beloved," he replied.

"Nay, Francis, who could help seeing it?" asked Miss Walton. "Arrah herself must needs know it, and yet she seems not so happy—not so cheerful as I should have thought such knowledge would make her, for I am very sure that she has loved him long; and at one time I feared for and pitied her."

"And he has loved her long too, Annie," replied the earl; "longer than you believe, or than he himself knew. This passion has been growing like a flower in the spring, first in the bud, as pity; then showing its first hues as deep interest and tenderness, then partly expanding like the timid blushing blossom that seems to fear that even the green leaves around should look into its glowing breast, and at last in the first warm day opening wide to the bright sun. Charles Walton, when first I saw your own dear eyes at Bishop's Merton, felt love, or something very like it, for Arrah Neil, and yet he would have been strangely hurt if any one had told him that he ever thought of the poor, wild cottage girl with aught but mere compassion."

"You men are strange beings," replied Annie Walton, with a sigh and a smile at the same time; "and yet I am not without my fears for that dear child. Unless the proofs of who she is can be found and clearly made out, what will be Charles's conduct?"

"I will tell you, love," answered Lord Beverley. "Pride will yield, Annie, to the noblest and strongest quality of your brother's heart, the sense of honour. He has displayed his love for her too openly to herself for Charles Walton to hesitate. Other men might do so, and think themselves justified in sacrificing her peace and their own affection to the cold judgment of the world; but if a time should come when he has to ask himself how he is to act to Arrah Neil, still

poor, still unknown in position, and even in name, he will feel himself plighted to her by the words and looks of these days, and, as I have said, he will not hesitate."

"I trust it may be so," replied the lady; "and, indeed, I think it will, for he is generous and kind; but yet I wish this man would return with the paper that he undertook to bring. Here several weeks have passed, and no tidings have been heard of him. Surely, that sad hypocrite Dry cannot have bribed him."

"Oh no!" exclaimed the earl, with a laugh: "all men have their own notions of honour, dearest, and though he is loose and dissolute, a babbler and a braggadoo, yet his courage and his fidelity are beyond doubt. He is either dead or he will come back—but what is that lying on the grass?"

"Good Heaven, it is a dead man!" cried Annie Walton, turning pale.

"Nay, some one asleep, rather," said her lover; "he is not like the dead. See, his arm is folded to pillow his head. Wait here a moment, Annie, and I will go and see."

Lord Beverley advanced to the spot where the person they had been speaking of was stretched in the long grass, and gazed upon him for an instant without speaking. Then taking him by the arm, he shook him gently to rouse him, and with a start, the sleeper sat up and gazed around.

"Good gracious me!" he cried, as first he woke, "where am I? Ah, my lord the earl, is that you? Well, this is a lucky chance indeed!"

"Why, how came you sleeping here, Master Falgate?" inquired the earl; "and how did you get out of Hull?"

"I came here on the carriage provided by nature, my good lord," answered the painter, "and I was sleeping because I could not keep my eyes open. To get out of Hull was no difficulty; but to get out of Worcester was hard work indeed;" and he went on to relate how he had travelled from Hull on foot to Worcester, and then, having ventured upon some loyal speeches over a cup of ale, had found himself speedily under charge of a guard, from whom he escaped after innumerable obstacles (which need not be detailed to the reader), and had walked from that city to the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury, a distance of more than forty-seven miles, between the preceding midnight and one o'clock that day, when, utterly exhausted, he had lain down to rest and fallen asleep.

"This is an old friend of mine, dear Annie," said the earl, turning to Miss Walton, who had come slowly up when she saw that the poor painter was not dead; "and as he showed good discretion in my case at a very critical moment, we must do what we can for him. So, Master Falgate," he continued, "the good folks of Worcester seem very rebelliously inclined to treat you so harshly for a few loyal words."

"Good faith, my noble lord, the men of Worcester had but little to do with it," replied Falgate; "it was Lord Essex's soldiery that were so barbarous to poor me. Have you not heard that he took up his quarters at Worcester yesterday?"

"No, indeed!" said the earl, with a cloud coming over his countenance at the thought of fresh dangers and delays. "No, indeed, but come with us into the city, Falgate. Your intelligence may be valuable; and as for yourself, I must do what I can to place you in some regiment of foot."

"No, no, my lord," answered the painter, "I

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have done with soldiering; I was never made for it. I do not like to paint men's faces with blood, or see it done. All that you can do for me is to bring me to speech of a noble gentleman named Lord Walton, if such a thing is ever to take place; for I have bunted him to Beverley, to York, to Nottingham, and then fading the Roundheads in the way in an unlucky day, took Worcester in my way hither. So I do think I shall never see him."

"Nothing can be more easy, my good friend," answered the earl. "Lord Walton is here, and this lady is his sister; so come with us, and you will see him in a few minutes."

The poor painter, who was not without his share of taste, was delighted at his meeting with Miss Walton, whose beautiful face and form were ready passports to respect and admiration; nor did her words and manner produce less effect; for to the heart of Annie, the least service rendered to him she loved made the doer interesting in her eyes; and with gentle tones and kindly looks, she told poor Diggorry Falgate that she had heard of him and of his discretion from Lord Beverley, and thanked him deeply for the caution he had shown. Had Diggorry Falgate been Captain Barecolt, she would instantly have had a full account of all that had been done to save the earl, by informing Sir John Hotham of his situation, together with various additions and improvements, which would have left all the honour of his deliverance with that worthy captain! But Falgate, to whom the presence of beauty had something almost awful in it, did not even take to himself the credit that was rightly his due, but walked on nearly in silence beside the earl and his fair companion, till, entering the town of Shrewsbury, they reached the house where Lady Margaret Langley and her young relatives had taken up their abode, near the Wellington Gate of the city.

"Is Lord Walton within?" the earl demanded, addressing one of the servants in the old porch; and the answer was, "Yes, my lord. He is in the small room on the left, with my lady;" and leading Annie on, with Falgate following close behind, Lord Beverley entered the chamber, saying, "Here is a good friend of mine, Charles, who brings you tidings from Hull."

Lord Walton rose from his seat between that of Lady Margaret and fair Arrah Neil, gazing upon the painter through the dim evening light which found its way through the tall lattice window, without the slightest recollection of his face, as, indeed, he had never before seen him. But the moment that Falgate beheld Arrah Neil, he advanced a step or two towards her, then stopped and hesitated, for her dress was much altered, and then went on again, but with a timid and doubtful air.

Arrah, however, welcomed him with a kindly smile, holding out her hand to him, and saying, "Ah, Master Falgate, I am glad to see you safe. This is the person whom I mentioned, Charles, who aided my escape from Hull."

"He deserves all our thanks, dear Arrah," replied Charles Walton, "and every recompense that we can give him; but did I understand right, sir, that you have business with me?"

"Why, I had, my noble lord," answered Falgate, in a somewhat flattering tone; "but—but, as I have found this young lady, I think it is to her I should speak, for the business is her own. I only asked for your lordship because—because I had heard that you were her best friend."

"Oh yes, indeed he is," exclaimed Arrah

Neil, warmly, "and whatever is to be said, had better be said to him. He can judge rightly of things that I do not understand."

"Well, then, speak to me here, sir," said Lord Walton, retreating towards the window. "You had better come too, Arrah, for we may want you in our council."

Falgate followed to the other side of the room, and Arrah Neil rose and joined them, while Annie Walton seated herself beside her aunt, and Lord Beverley took a place on the other side of Lady Margaret's chair, engaging her attention by an account of their walk. Nor was it accidentally he did so; for he knew that at that moment, though the fine countenance of the old dame was calm, there were many thoughts and memories, many doubts and hopes, busy in her bosom—too busy far for peace. In the mean time, he turned his eyes every now and then towards the window, against which appeared the fine and dignified form of Lord Walton, with the light of evening shining full upon his lordly brow and chiselled features, and the sweet profile of Arrah Neil, with the graceful outline of her figure, all in deep shade. The painter seemed speaking eagerly, while they listened, and from time to time Charles Walton bent his head or asked a question; while Arrah Neil, with her face inclined towards the ground, once or twice raised her handkerchief to her eyes and seemed to wipe away a tear. At length the painter drew forth from his pocket a small packet, which he placed in Lord Walton's hands, and a slip of paper, which he held while the young nobleman examined eagerly the contents of the packet. They seemed various; some of them being letters and scraps of parchment, some small trinkets. When he had gazed upon them all, one after the other, Charles Walton gave them to Arrah Neil, first, however, drawing her arm through his own, as if to support her. Then taking the paper from Falgate's hand, he read what was written on it attentively; and then, turning once more to his fair companion, he kissed her tenderly, adding a few words, the last of which sounded like "My dear cousin."

Lady Margaret Langley caught them and started up, but instantly resumed her seat; and Lord Walton, taking Arrah's hand in his, while he supported her trembling steps with his arm, led her forward to the old lady's chair. The fair girl sank upon her knees, and bent her head before Lady Margaret, while in a low and solemn voice the young nobleman said, "My dear aunt, it is as you have dreamed. This sweet girl is your child's child."

Lady Margaret said not a word, but cast her arms round Arrah Neil, bent her head upon her fair neck, and wept in silence; then raised her tearful eyes towards heaven and sobbed aloud. The old staghound, too, as if he comprehended all and shared in all, approached, and with a low whine licked his mistress's withered hand.

She speedily grew calm, however, and looking up to her nephew without taking her arm from Arrah's neck, she asked, "But is it all true, Charles? Is it all proved? Is she the heiress of my house?"

"Nothing but a few minute links in the chain of evidence is wanting," replied Lord Walton; "and quite enough is proved, my dear aunt, to leave no doubt whatever on our minds, as I will show you, though other papers, indeed, are wanting at present which might be needful to establish her right and legitimacy in a court of law.

Whatever might be its decision, however, to us she must be ever our own dear cousin Arabella Tyron."

"Oh no, no," cried the poor girl, starting up and clasping her hands, "still Arrah Neil! to you, Charles, to all of you, still Arrah Neil!"

Lord Walton gazed upon her with a look of earnest tenderness, and a faint smile crossed his fine lip. Perhaps he thought that whatever was her name for the time, she would soon be Arabella Walton; but he could not agitate her more at that moment, and was about to proceed with the account he was rendering to Lady Margaret, when Lord Beverley advanced and extended his arms to Arrah Neil. She gazed upon him in surprise; but he pressed her to his bosom warmly, eagerly, and kissed her brow, exclaiming, "Fear not, dear child! fear not! The same blood flows in your veins and mine. I am not deceived, Lady Margaret; her father was my mother's brother, is it not so?"

"It is," said Lady Margaret. "Ask me no questions yet, my child. He is your cousin, and he and his have forgiven me and mine. I trust that God has forgiven us; and you may have to do so too when you hear all. Say, will you do it, Arrah?"

The fair girl fell upon her neck and kissed her; and Annie Walton then claimed her share of tenderness, though to her the tale had been developed more gradually, and was not heightened by surprise.

It was a strange and touching scene, however, even to one who witnessed it, like the poor painter, without any personal interest in the recovery of the lost lamb, and Falgate's eyes were as full of tears as those of the rest when he was called forward by Lord Walton to give an exact account of how he had found the packet which he had brought that day. His tale was somewhat confused, and the particulars need not be related here, as the reader is already acquainted with them; but when he spoke of the account given by the good hostess of the inn, and pointed out the facts she had written down; when he detailed his visit to the vault and the opening of the coffin, Lady Margaret Langley sobbed aloud, exclaiming, "My child! oh, my child! Ah, didst thou die so near me, and no mother's hand to close thine eyes?"

When she had somewhat recovered, however, she took the tokens and the papers which had been found in the coffin, and gazed upon them one after the other with many a sad comment. There were two rings she recollected well. One she had given herself, and a small gold circlet for the brow. It was on the child's sixteenth birthday, she said, the last she ever spent within her father's halls. Then she read the certificate of marriage and a short statement of events, in a hand that she knew too well, wiping the bitter drops from her eyes that she might see the words; and then she kissed the name written below, and drawing Arrah to her heart, embraced her long.

At length she looked round and asked, "What is, then, wanting, Charles? All doubt is done away."

"To us it is, my dear aunt," answered Lord Walton; "but the law will require proof that this dear girl, so long called Arrah Neil, is the same as the child whom old Sergeant Neil brought from Hull to Bishop's Merton many years ago. Those proofs, I hope, will be soon found. Indeed, I expected that they would have

been brought hither ere now. Some strange delay has taken place, but doubtless some mere accident has caused it, and, at all events, we are satisfied."

Miss Walton whispered something to her brother as he ended, to which he replied quickly, "You are right, Annie! I will do it. Stay with my aunt and cheer her till we return. There is a tale to be told this dear girl," he said, speaking to Lady Margaret, "which is too sad for you to tell. Let me do it, my dear aunt. I know all the facts."

"Ay, but not the feelings, Charles," replied the old lady: "yet do so, if you will; I can tell the rest hereafter, when I am calmer—for this will pass away. I never thought to have shed tears again; I fancied the fountains were dried up. Tell her, Charles—tell her! but not here."

"No, I will speak with her in the dining hall," replied Lord Walton. "Come, dear Arrah. It is better to perform a painful task at once;" and, taking her hand, he led her from the room.

CHAPTER XLVI

It was a large old hall lined with black oak: the sun was setting in splendour, and the rich rosy light poured in through the windows, casting a faint glow upon the old carved wreaths and glistening panels.

"Perhaps," said Lord Walton, as they entered and he closed the door, "perhaps I had better order them to bring lights, dear Arrah; for the sun will be down ere my tale is told."

"Oh no!" answered Arrah Neil, "there will be light enough for so sad a story as this must be; and we can sit in this window, where we can see the last look of day."

Her cousin led her to one of those old-fashioned window seats where many of us have sat in our own youth, and took his place beside his fair companion, gazing with her for a moment out upon the evening sky. At length, with a start, as if he had forgotten for a time the cause of their coming, he said, "But to my tale, Arrah. Many years ago, my poor aunt fancied herself the happiest of women; far from courts or crowds, in the midst of wild scenes that suited her turn of mind, and with a husband who loved her deeply, and a daughter whom they both adored. Sir Richard Langley was a soldier, however, of much renown; and in the wars of Ireland, he carried Lady Margaret and their child to Dublin. They there first became acquainted with a young Irish nobleman, nearly related to that great man—for I must call him so, though he was a rebel—the celebrated Earl of Tyrone. Your mother was then but a child, dear Arrah, and this nobleman a youth; but after the return of Sir Richard and his wife to Langley Hall, he came to visit his elder sister, who was then married to the Earl of Beverley. Near neighbourhood produced intimacy, but the Irish noble and the English knight differed on many a point, in mere opinion, it is true; but the effect was such that, when the young man asked the hand of the old man's daughter, it was refused with some discourtesy. Lady Margaret herself would not hear of such a marriage, though rank, and station, and fortune all were his; but she loved not to part with her daughter, and still less to part with her for a land which she looked upon as barbarous and full of strife. Your father, Arrah, was rash and vehement, im-

patient of opposition, and easily moved to any daring deed, though generous and kind, and full of honour. He had gained your mother's love, too, and he knew it; and when he left Langley Hall, rejected in his suit, he vowed that six months should not pass ere she should be his bride. Not six weeks went by, when, going out to walk, sad and lonely, as had become her custom, she did not return. Search was made, but she could not be found, and no certain information was to be obtained. One man had heard a distant cry, one had seen a ship hovering on the coast hard by, and several had seen a troop of men, strangers evidently both from their dress and language, wandering near Langley Hall. A few weeks of terrible suspense passed, and then the Lady Margaret received a letter in her daughter's hand, signed Arabella Tyrone. It told of her marriage with him she loved, and that love was openly acknowledged. There was, indeed, a vague hint given that she had not gone willingly, nor intentionally disobeyed her parents; but no details were afforded.

"The answer was written in anger, bidding her see them and write to them no more; and Sir Richard, remembering the vow of him who was now his son-in-law, swore that he would find a time to make him beg for pardon on his knees. Years passed ere that bitter vow could be exercised. Your father, for the sake of an adored wife, bent his spirit to sue by letter for forgiveness and oblivion of the past; but that did not satisfy the stern old man, and at length his time came. Fresh troubles broke out in Ireland: Sir Richard Langley received a new command; and against your father—then, alas! preparing to take arms against the government—he chiefly urged an expedition. That country has always had divisions and feuds in its own bosom, and a party of the enemies of Tyrone were easily formed to join their efforts to a small body of regular troops, and guide them through the passes to your father's castle—"

"I remember it well," said Arrah Neil, "and the terrace looking to the mountains."

"When Sir Richard found he whom he sought was absent with his wife and child," continued Lord Walton, "and that there was likely to be the most desperate resistance without fruit, he was inclined to pause, and perhaps might have retreated, but those with whom he was now acting governed his will. They would not hear of delay or hesitation, with their enemy's hold before them. He remonstrated in vain: the attack commenced, and though he took no part therein, and likewise restrained his men, he had the grief of seeing his daughter's dwelling taken, pillaged, and burned to the ground before his eyes. There, alas! perished, dear Arrah, the poor sister of my friend, your cousin; and the sight of her blackened remains, which at first he would hardly believe were not yours, though he had before been told you were not there, turned the heart of Sir Richard Langley to more charitable thoughts. He repented bitterly, but the cup of his chastisement was not yet full. Your father, after having seen your mother and yourself embark to seek refuge in Holland, was taken by a party of the old knight's troops, demanded by the government as a state prisoner, and in spite of every effort, remonstrance, prayer, and petition, was tried and executed as a traitor. Pardon me, dear Arrah, that I speak such harsh words, and do so without trying to soften them, for I wish to be as brief as may be."

Arrah Neil wept, but made no answer, and Lord Walton went on: "Among those who most honestly entreated for your father's life were Sir Richard Langley and my aunt, Lady Margaret; but those were times, Arrah, when pampered sovereignty had never known the softening touch of adversity, and flatterers and knaves were heard when the honest and true were scorned. Naught availed, and the old knight gave himself up to bitter remorse. Your poor mother was sought for, and every post took a letter to some one of those lands which it was supposed she might have visited; but no such person was found; and at length a vague rumour reached Langley Hall that she and her child were dead. Whence it came, what was its foundation, no one could discover; but as year rolled by on year, and no tidings came, the report was credited. The old man accused himself of murdering his daughter and her husband, and inflicted on himself strange and superstitious punishments; and though poor Lady Margaret, knowing that her heart was burdened with the deeds that had taken place more than his, bore her sad bereavement more tranquilly, yet she could not altogether exculpate herself from the charge of harshness, and shared in all his penitence, and took part in all his grief. Though remorse often goes with long life, yet such was not the case here. Sir Richard Langley died after four or five years of unavailing regret, and Lady Margaret remained as you have seen, changed, very much changed from what she once was, but yet with fine and noble principles at heart. She was always of a somewhat wild and enthusiastic temper of mind, and that disposition has deviated of late into great eccentricity of character. The thing that she has most loved and cherished—if not the only thing—has been that faithful dog, who was saved, when young, from the burning castle of your poor father, and who, on the night of your arrival, displayed such strange signs of recognition."

"Oh, I remember him well now," replied Arrah Neil. "There was a sunny bank below the terrace, near a small lake, and I used to put my little arms round his shaggy neck, and laugh when he bit in play at the curls of my hair. It seems but yesterday, now that the dark mist has been removed from between me and memory. But go on, Charles; I do but stop you."

Lord Walton had fallen into a reverie—a sweet one it was—to which he had been led by the picture that she drew of her fair self in infancy. He thought he saw her on the flowery bank at sport with her rough companion, and he might have fancied to gaze long on that pleasant sight, had not her words roused him.

"I have no more to tell, dear Arrah," he replied: "the rest of your fate and history you know better than I do; but yet there is one point—"

She stopped and gazed upon her as far as the fading light would let him do so; and his heart beat more than he thought anything on earth could have made it do. Arrah Neil raised her eyes with a look of inquiry to his face, but the inquiry was instantly answered by what she saw there, and, with a cheek of crimson, she withdrew her glance as soon as it was given.

"Arrah," said Lord Walton, in a low and agitated tone, "I have loved you long—longer, I find now, than I myself have known—ay, Arrah, I have loved you from childhood; and lately I have thought—have hoped—have dreamed, perhaps—that you loved me."

Arrah Neil was silent for a moment—only a moment; but she did nothing like any one else: once more raising her eyes to his face, she laid her soft hand on his, and asked, "Who have I ever loved but you?" and then the tears rolled over the long lashes and diamonded her cheek.

Charles Walton had felt in those few brief moments as he had never felt before—as he had never imagined that he could feel. He, the calm, the firm, the strong-minded, had felt timid as a child before the cottage girl, the object of his long bounty, the partaker of his house's charity; and he knew, from that strange sensation, how powerful was the love within him; while she, though agitated, though moved, gained, from the very pure singleness of the one strong passion which had dwelt in her breast for years, that strength to avow it, which he seemed scarcely able to command.

But that avowal once made on her part—though he knew it—though he could not doubt it before—restored him at once to himself again; and, casting his arms round her, he called her his own dear bride.

A few minutes passed in sweet emotions; in words so broken and confused that they would seem nonsense if here written; in signs and tokens of the heart which form a sacred language that ought not to be transcribed. But then Charles Walton spoke of his sister's near-approaching marriage, and urged that she whom he loved would put the seal that day on her fate also.

Arrah turned pale and shook her head; and when her lover, with soothing words and kind assurances, sought to remove what he believed to be mere timid scruples of a young heart to so hasty a marriage, she answered, "No, Charles, no! it is not that. I would not so ill repay your generous kindness. I would not so badly return my benefactor's love. But I cannot—no, I cannot—I ought not, nay, I dare not unite my fate with yours till all doubt be removed of who and what I am. Oh, Charles, I love you deeply—you know it—you must have seen it; but yet, in truth and deep sincerity, I tell you that even could you have condescended to have the poor wild peasant girl as you knew her long ago, Arrah Neil had too much love for Charles Walton to let him so demean himself. No, as your equal by birth, however much inferior in mind and every other quality, I am yours when you will; I will not say a word; I will not plead even for a day's delay. But there must be no doubt; it must be all proved."

"My dearest Arrah," replied her lover, tenderly, "I have no doubt—all is clear—all is proved to me."

"But not to the world, Charles, not to the world," she answered; "you have yourself admitted it; and you must not, indeed you must not urge me, if you would not make me unhappy—unhappy either to refuse aught that you ask, or unhappy to do that which I think wrong."

Still he would have persuaded; but she gazed at him reproachfully, saying, "Oh, Charles, forbear!" and he felt the heart beneath his arm beat violently.

"Well, then, Arrah," he said, in a somewhat mournful tone, "remember, my beloved, you have promised that whenever these papers can be found, and I think they will be soon, or that your birth be by any other means clearly established, you will be mine without delay."

"The instant that you ask me," replied Arrah

Neil; and shortly after Charles Walton led her back to the arms of Lady Margaret Langley. He left her there, and hurried out to the houses where his men were lodged; and seeking out old Major Randal, bade him to send out a small party in the direction of Bishop's Merton, with orders to inquire for Captain Barecolt at every village on the way.

"In that part of the country," he said, anticipating the old soldier's objections, "I find that the Parliamentary party dare not show their face, and there can be no danger of surprise. Lord Hertford's people keep the Roundheads down."

"Oh, I have no objection, my good lord," answered Major Randal, dryly: "I could as ill spare Barecolt as your lordship, though he has been too much absent from his troop of late; but if it be for his majesty's service, I have naught to say. However, in time of need he always proves himself a good soldier; and in time of idleness he amuses me, which few things do nowadays. I can hardly make him out yet, after having known him ten years or more; for I never knew any one but himself who was a braggart and a brave man, a liar and an honest one. However, I will send out a party to-night, as your lordship seems anxious."

The old officer went out to do as he proposed; but Lord Walton did not return at once to his dwelling, as might be supposed. On the contrary, he remained in Major Randal's quarters buried in deep thought, so intense, so absorbing, that several persons came and went without his perceiving them. For months he had struggled against the passion in his bosom; he had struggled successfully, not to crush it, but to restrain; and, like a dammed up torrent, it had gone on increasing in power behind the barrier that confined it, till now that the obstacle was removed, and it rushed forth with overwhelming power. There was an eager, a vehement, an almost apprehensive longing to call her he loved his own, which can only be felt by a strong spirit that has resisted its own impulses. There was a fear that it never would be, a vague impression that some unforeseen impediment, some change, some danger, nay, perhaps death itself, would interpose and forbid it; and, when he roused himself with a start, he resolved to urge Arrah with every argument to cast aside all her scruples and be his at once.

He found her seated by Lady Margaret, with the old woman's hand in hers and the stag-hound's head upon her knee; and there had been evidently agitating but tender words passing, for Arrah's eyes were full of tears, though there was a sweet smile upon her lip. Charles Walton was too full of his errand for any concealment; he told Lady Margaret all, and besought her to join her persuasions to his, which she did joyfully. But the fair girl resisted, gently, sweetly, yet firmly, even though he spoke of the chances of his own death. The thought brought bright drops into her eyes again; but still she besought him not to ask her, and looked so mournfully, so reproachfully in his face, when he seemed to doubt her love, that he was once more forced to yield. What was it that made her so resolute against his wishes—ay, against the dearest feelings of her own heart? There was a dread, a fancy, that if she became Charles Walton's wife, and the proofs of her birth should never be discovered, he might regret what he had done, that he might

wish the words unspoken, the bond of their union broken. She did not do him full justice; but the very idea was agony, and though she knew that whatever he might feel in such a case, he was too generous to let her perceive his regret, yet she saw sufficiently into her own heart to be sure that she should doubt and fear, and that no peace, no joy would ever be hers, if, in her marriage to him, there was one cause which could produce reasonable regret.

CHAPTER XLVII.

It was a bright sunny morning, when, walking forth as if for some mere morning excursion, the Earl of Beverley, with Lady Margaret Langley leaning on his arm, and Lord Walton, with his sister, took their way to the old church in Shrewsbury. Arrah Neil, with old Major Randal and one or two of the servants, had gone a different way; for Annie Walton, though the custom of those days was different, did not wish, in the midst of civil war, confusion, and bloodshed, to checker sadder scenes with the spectacle of a gay wedding. One by one they entered the church; and there was no gaping crowd to witness; all was quiet, and even solemn; but the bright smile of the morning cheered the fair bride's heart, and lent to imagination an augury of happy hours. The ceremony was soon over; and Lord Walton gave his sister to his friend, undoubtedly with joy and satisfaction; but yet he could not refrain one bitter sigh, or forbear from turning his eyes sadly and reproachfully to Arrah Neil; but that glance was met by so tender, so imploring a look from that fair and speaking face, that he easily read in it, that to hold her resolution cost her as much as it cost him.

Four or five days passed after sweet Annie Walton had become the wife of Lord Beverley, and still no news had been received from Bishop's Merton. The king had returned some time before to Shrewsbury; many bodies of men had flocked to his standard; reports favourable to his cause had been rife; risings in his favour on the road to London had been rumoured; and news had been received that, under the very walls of Worcester, Prince Rupert's fiery horse had defeated a superior party of the enemy. Every one began to speak of a speedy advance towards the capital, and all seemed glad of the prospect except Charles Walton. At length the order for preparation was given, and all was bustle and activity. Lord Walton proposed to his aunt to remain with her he loved at Shrewsbury; but Lady Margaret answered, "No, Charles; I will follow you as near as I can; and if I know Arrah right, she would not stay behind. As soon as you know the direction of your march we will set out, and, perhaps, may be your harbingers to prepare your quarters for you. I fear not, my dear boy. These Roundheads are not anthropophagi, and will not eat up women and children."

The Royal army marched on the following morning, the 12th of October; but for ten days Arrah Neil only saw her lover once at Bridgworth, and Annie Walton only once her husband; for though the king's leave was given that he should remain for a fortnight more with his bride at Longnor, even love could not keep him from his duty, and love and duty both taught her to follow where he went.

No news was heard of an enemy, the march of the king's force was unopposed, and the only inconvenience that was experienced was the frequent want of good provisions; for the false reports industriously spread by the agents of the Parliament induced the people of the country to believe that the Cavaliers plundered wherever they came. Day by day, however, Arrah Neil or her fair cousin received letters or messengers from the army, and this was consolation under any privation, till at length, towards the end of October, the small party of ladies, with the servants that attended them, reached the small village of South Newington, a few miles from Banbury, and obtained lodging at a large old farmhouse in the neighbourhood, close on the banks of the little Sarbrook. They were indeed glad enough to find shelter, for the weather was cold and stormy; and the good farmer received them willingly enough, and prayed the king might prosper; for the vicinity of a Parliamentary garrison in Banbury had taught the peasantry, though somewhat late in the day, that gross tyranny can be exercised in the name of liberty, and bitter injustice practised by those who have ever law and equity on their lips. It was about three in the afternoon when they reached the farmhouse; and while hasty preparations were being made for their accommodation, which the extent of the building rendered not very difficult, Arrah Neil stood at the window gazing out upon the fields, the sky, and the stream. Heavy leaden clouds hung overhead, and shut out the blue of heaven and the beams of the sun; a dull gray shower was pouring heavily upon the earth, dimming the bright colouring of the autumnal foliage; the stream ran turbid with a sad and solemn murmur, and the hoarse wind howled as it passed the casement. Her thoughts were as gloomy as the scene, and something like the dark shadow which used formerly to come over her seemed to rest upon her spirit. The old stag-hound came and put his muzzle in her hand, but she noticed him not; the servants came and went, but she saw them not. Lady Margaret spoke, but her ear did not catch the sounds. At length Lady Beverley pronounced her name; and Arrah Neil started, for the tones were like those of Lord Walton, and she was turning round to reply, when her eye caught a sight of two Cavaliers riding into the court.

A look of joy instantly spread over her face, and she exclaimed, "Oh, Annie, dear Annie, there is Captain Barecolt; and Charles will be happy now."

As soon as he could spring from his horse and find his way up the stairs, Captain Barecolt was in the room. He was very pale and very thin, and Annie Walton thought for a moment that he must be the bearer of evil tidings, but his well-satisfied smile soon set her fears at rest.

"What news? what news, sir?" exclaimed Lady Margaret, who had shared the apprehensions of her niece.

"None but good ones, madam," replied the captain. "Lord Walton has honoured me by making me his messenger from Edgecot, where he is now with his majesty. No enemy is near, Banbury is about to be besieged, and, consequently, cavalry are out of fashion. So we shall have three or four days' repose; for they will doubtless hold out that time for their honour, and, to say truth, I shall not be sorry even myself for a little rest, having been let blood pretty sharply since I stood last in this fair presence."

I can bear bleeding, methinks, as well as most men, being somewhat accustomed to the process; but this Master Dry, of Longsoaken, was an unskilful leech, and took so much that there was very little left, and I was obliged to lie in bed at Chippenham for ten days."

"But you are wet, Captain Barecolt, and fatigued," said Lady Beverley. "will you take some refreshment?"

"Not before I have done my errand, bright lady," replied the officer; "which is simply to tell you that my Lord Walton and your noble lord will be over here with all speed, and to give this packet to another fair lady, in whose cause I have laboured and suffered successfully;" and approaching Arrah Neil, who had been listening with eager attention to every word that fell from his lips, he kissed her hand, and gave her her lover's letter.

She took and read it eagerly, while her heart beat fast, and her brain almost turned giddy with joy.

"My own beloved!" it ran. "Barecolt joined me last night, delayed by accidents, which he will tell you. He brings with him all the papers which were plundered from the cottage of poor old Neil; and they, beyond all question, together with the others that we possess, establish your birth and your rights. I enclose them for your comfort. Show them to Lady Margaret, and, dearest Arrah, remember the promise that you made to me. We halt here for three days, and I will be with you in an hour, not to part with you again till you are the bride of him who loves you more than life."

"CHARLES WALTON."

Arrah paused for a moment or two, and leaned upon the table. Her hand that held the letter shook and her cheek glowed; but there were light in her beautiful eyes and a smile upon her sweet lip. Then calmly gliding forward to Lady Margaret, she gave her the papers which her lover's letter had contained, saying, "Now, indeed, beyond all doubt, I am your child."

Then turning to her cousin, she placed Charles Walton's letter in her hand, gazing on her face while she read it with a look calm, but full of many thoughts and feelings. Lady Beverley, when she had done, cast her arm round her, whispering, "My dear Arrah, now I think he has a right to expect—"

"Everything that love and gratitude can prompt," replied her fair companion. "I would not thwart him even in a thought, Annie. To you, sir," she continued, speaking aloud and addressing Captain Barecolt, "I owe an infinite debt, which I must trust to those who can acquit it better to acknowledge fully and discharge. But indeed, Annie, he needs tendance and refreshment—see, Lady Margaret is moved; will you order him what is needful?"

"By your permission, fair ladies, I will take care of myself," answered the redoubtable captain: "it is a trade I am accustomed to, I can assure you; and wherever bread and bacon, ale and wine are to be found, I am quite equal to find them out."

"Pray do, sir, pray do," said Lady Beverley; and Captain Barecolt left them to themselves. The moments that intervened before the arrival of those that were expected were full of agitation, yet very sweet, and ere the hour was out, Arrah Neil placed herself once more at the window to watch for their coming. She had not gazed long through the decreasing light when

her ear caught the sound of horses' feet, and in a moment after Charles Walton and the earl, followed by a few servants, rode up at a quick pace. They were accompanied, however, by another gentleman in a black cossack and a cloak to keep him from the rain, and the poor girl's heart fluttered wildly at the sight. But still giving way to the impulse, she only paused to exclaim, "Here they are, dear Annie!" and, running down to the door, was soon in Charles Walton's arms.

"Dear one! dear one!" said the young nobleman as he pressed her to his heart, reading her deep love in her eyes; "I have come to put you to a trial, my Arrah, and see whether you will keep your promise frankly."

"To the letter, and with pleasure, Charles," replied Arrah Neil, in a low murmur, that reached no ear but his.

"To-night?" asked Lord Walton; "the king's chaplain must return—all forms are already cleared away."

"This very hour, if you desire it," answered she whom he loved: "your lightest wish is my law henceforth till death."

Charles Walton could not reply; but taking her hand, he led her to the chaplain, and then conducted him, under her guidance, to the room above.

We need not pause upon explanations. All was soon arranged and determined. After a brief and sober meal, and with none but one or two of the servants and Captain Barecolt present, the party formed a circle round, and the chaplain opened the book. In the silence that succeeded, the howling of the wind and the pattering of the rain was heard; and Arrah Neil turned an anxious glance towards the casement, for though her bosom was full of deep and strong emotions, there was something in the sound that seemed to connect itself with them. Charles Walton saw but her, thought of her alone; and after a brief pause the chaplain went on. Word by word he read the whole service through, the vow was plighted, the ring was on the finger, and with joy he had feared he might never know, Charles Walton held Arrah Neil as his wife to his bosom.

Silence had spread over the world for some hours. It was between two and three in the morning, and as dark as the grave, when first a horse's feet were heard coming at full speed, and then came a loud knocking at the door. All those who slept roused themselves, and in a few minutes there were steps upon the stairs. The voice of Captain Barecolt was then heard speaking to the Earl of Beverley.

"The king has sent, my lord," he said, "to order us all to draw to a rendezvous on the top of Edgell, near Kineton. Lord Essex is in power in the valley below, and it is resolved to give him battle. We will cut him to mince-meat."

"Tell Lord Walton," said the voice of the earl, "knock at the opposite door;" but ere Captain Barecolt could follow these directions, the young lord came out partly dressed.

"See that the horses be fed instantly, Barecolt," said Charles Walton, "and then have them saddled. I will join you in a few minutes," and he retired. His bride rose and cast her arms around him in silence.

"Nay, Arrah, dear Arrah, I must go where my king commands," he said, struggling against the feelings of his own heart.

"I know it, Charles," she answered, in a far calmer tone than he had expected. "I would not keep you for aught on earth. But let me go with you, my dear husband; I shall have no fear; I will stay upon some hill as I did once before, and witness my hero fighting for his king."

"Impossible, impossible, dear girl!" he cried; "this is a very different affair. To-night I trust, in God's mercy, to return and tell you that we have won the victory and regained our monarch's throne. It must be so, indeed, my beloved; you know not what you ask."

Arrah paused in sad and silent thought for a moment, and then said, "Well, let me be with you to the last before you go;" and dressing herself hastily, she followed him down. Lady Beverley was soon by her side; few words were spoken; all was quick preparation, and ere four o'clock, with pale and anxious faces, those two fair girls took one more embrace, and saw their husbands ride away into the darkness. It had ceased raining, but it was bitter cold, and the wind blew sharply in; yet they gazed forth as long as even fancy could show the receding forms, and then, linked arm in arm, they retired to Lady Beverley's room to pray, each asking her own heart the question she did not dare utter aloud, "Who will return? who rest upon the field?" There was a faint streak of gray in the sky when they parted, and Annie counselled her fair cousin to lie down and strive for sleep.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE morning of Sunday, the 21st of October, broke dull and cold, the gray clouds swept hurriedly over the sky like charging squadrons, and the wind whistled through the branches of a solitary clump of old beeches which marked the highest point of the sharp rise called Edgell. From the brow might be seen a wide open slope extending down nearly to the little town of Keniton, or Kineton, with some flat meadows at the bottom, having a number of hedges and enclosures on the left as one looked from the hill. On the other side all was at that time open, and the fair undulations of Warwickshire might be seen beyond, with the brown woods clothed in a light mist. It was a peaceful and pleasant scene in the gray morning, notwithstanding the coldness and dullness of the day, and very soon after dawn the pale blue smoke began to ascend from the chimneys of the little town, rising slowly till it was caught by the wind from the hill, and then hurrying away with a few light rolls, and losing itself in air.

Shortly after a drum was heard to beat below, and then came the blast of the trumpet, and soon troops might be descried forming slowly and quietly in the plain, as if about to commence a safe and easy march. Horse and foot took their places in long line, and here and there officers and camp followers were seen walking carelessly about, while at other spots some more rigid disciplinarians might be observed putting their men into better order, and galloping hither and thither in all the bustle of command.

Suddenly, however, some confusion was observed in one part of the plain where a group of gentlemen on horseback had been visible for some time, and two persons detached themselves from the rest, and rode up at full speed towards

the brow of the hill, towards which all eyes were now turned. What saw they then which caused such apparent surprise? It was a small party of horse, not more than twenty in number, which had just moved up from the other side, and now halted, gazing into the valley. There were scarfs, and plumes, and glittering arms among them, betokening no peaceful occupation; and after a moment's pause a trumpeter, mounted on a gray horse, put his instrument to his lips and blew a long, loud blast. The next moment fresh heads appeared above the edge, and troop after troop rode forward, and in fair array took up a position at the summit.

All was changed on the plain below in a moment: activity and temporary confusion succeeded the quiet regularity which had been before observable; the two horsemen who had been detached from the group in front were hurriedly recalled; musketeers were seen filing off to the left, the cavalry was collecting on the wings, the foot began to form line in the centre, and the party which had remained a little in advance were discovered moving slowly along quite across the valley, while from time to time a horseman dashed away from it, and seemed to convey orders to this or that regiment in different parts of the field.

Essex was now first aware of the presence of an enemy, and easily divined that he could march no farther without fighting; but it is more with those above that we have to do. Soon after the small body of Cavaliers on the hill had been discovered by the Roundhead army, up came at headlong speed, followed by some eight or ten gentlemen who could hardly keep pace with him, a fiery-looking youth, with his beaver up and his eye lightening with eager impetuosity. He seemed barely one-and-twenty years of age, but there was on his brow the look of habitual command, and in the quick roll of his eye over the Parliamentary army, the sudden pause it made here and there, and then its rapid turn towards another point, one might see how closely he scanned the forces of the enemy, how keenly he observed all that seemed worthy of attention.

"They see us, your highness," said one of the gentlemen who had arrived before him. "They were actually commencing their march when we appeared."

"They would not have marched far, my lord," replied Prince Rupert; "but 'tis as well as it is. There are more of them than I thought, but we must make valour supply numbers. I had heard that they had left two regiments behind at Stratford."

"Three, sir; two of infantry and one of cavalry," replied Lord Walton; "but that seems to me the best of all reasons for giving battle as soon as possible."

"The very best!" answered the prince, with a smile: "victory is more needful to us than food, and of that we have had no great plenty. But, by my life, there is not a regiment of foot within sight. The foot are sad encumbrances. Would that these times were like the days of old, when every gentleman fought on horseback. We are fallen upon vulgar days."

"I see the head of a regiment among those distant hedges," said the Earl of Beverley; "but our quarters were very much scattered last night."

"And some noble persons had fair young wives to visit, my good lord," replied the prince, bowing his head with a smile.

"True," rejoined the earl; "but yet your highness sees they are not the last in the field, as how should they be, when they have such treasures to defend, such eyes for witnesses?"

The reply suited the prince well, and after some more gay conversation, he dismounted from his horse and seated himself under one of the beech-trees, watching attentively every movement of the enemy, and from time to time pointing out to those around him the measures taking by Lord Essex for defence.

"See," he said, "he is filling those hedges with musketeers. Aston and his dragoons must clear them; I will not break my teeth upon such stones. He is forming a powerful reserve there, I suppose, under Ramsay or the Earl of Bedford, and he has got all his foot in the centre. Who is that on their left, I wonder? Well, I shall soon know, for I trust it will not be long before I see him closer. Would to Heaven these tardy foot would come. We are giving him full time for every arrangement he could desire, and you may be sure he will not stir from among those hedges till we dislodge him."

But the impatient prince had long to wait, for ten o'clock was near at hand ere the first regiment of royal infantry were on the ground. From that time, indeed, every quarter of an hour brought up some fresh body; but even these had marched far, and the men needed some refreshment. All that could be given them was a brief space of repose and some cold water, for provisions were not to be obtained. The soldiery, however, were full of ardour, and many a gay jest and gibe passed among those who were never destined to quit that plain.

Among other events that have been noticed by historians is the fact that the king's guard, composed entirely of gentlemen volunteers, having heard, as they followed the monarch, some slight scoff at their peculiar post near his person, besought him to dispense with their close attendance that day, and obtained permission to charge with the cavalry of Prince Rupert on the right. On the left, a smaller body of horse, commanded by Commissary-general Wilmot, and a regiment of dragoons, under Sir Arthur Aston, had the task of assailing the right of the Parliamentary army, protected as it was by enclosures lined with musketeers; and to this service the small corps of the Earl of Beverley were also assigned. Lord Walton fought upon the right under the prince, and but one regiment of cavalry, led by Sir John Byron, was kept back as a reserve.

One o'clock had passed, when at length, after a short consultation with the Earl of Lindsay, the king commanded his forces to march slowly down the hill towards Kineton. The distance was considerable, and before the ground was reached on which it was thought advisable to begin the battle, the day had so far advanced, that some old and experienced officers suggested a delay till the following morning. But sufficient arguments were not wanting to show that Essex must gain and his sovereign lose by such a course; the troops, too, were eager to engage; and a very general belief prevailed that few of the Parliamentary regiments would really be brought to fight against the king. In the confusion of all accounts, it is hardly to be discovered how the battle really commenced; but certain it is that Prince Rupert burst into fury at the very thought of delay, and that his force of cavalry first commenced the fight by charging the left of

the enemy; as he was waiting to give the word, with all his blood on fire at the thought of the approaching strife, he remarked Lord Walton twice turn round and gaze towards the hill in the rear, and he asked, in a sharp tone, "What look you for, my lord? Soldiers should ever look forward."

Charles Walton's brow became as dark as night, and it cost him a moment's thought ere he could reply with calmness, "I looked, sir, for one I thought I saw on the hill as we moved down; and as to the rest, Rupert of Bavaria has never been more forward on the field, nor ever will be, than Charles Walton. But there is other matter to attend now: see you that regiment of horse advancing to the charge?"

The prince looked round, and beheld a considerable body of the enemy coming on at a quick pace, pistol in hand. He raised his sword above his head, and was about to speak the word; but at that moment the opposite party discharged their shot into the ground, and galloping on, wheeled their horses into line with the Cavaliers. A buzz ran through the ranks of "Fortescue, Fortescue—he was forced to join the Roundhead—many more are in the same case!" and at the same moment the cry of "Charge!" was heard, and hurled like a thunderbolt against the mass of the enemy's cavalry on the left, with the prince at their head, the gallant force of Cavaliers rushed on. A fire, innocuous from the terror and confusion with which it was directed, was opened upon them by the adverse line; but ere swords crossed, the Parliamentary cavalry of the left wing, with the exception of one small body, turned the rein and fled. The Cavaliers thundered on the flank and rear; men and horses rolled over together, and foremost in the fight, wherover a show of resistance was made, was the bridegroom of a day.

"Lightning and devils!" cried Captain Barecolt, who followed hard upon his steps: "see what love will make a man do. He has distanced the prince by six horse lengths, and he will have that standard in a minute. Ouns, my lord, let a man have his share."

On, on they rushed, pursuers and pursued, along the plain, over the hill; down went steel jack, and half coat, and iron morion. Some turned at the last to strike one stroke for life; but still the fiery spur of Rupert and of Walton were behind them, and Edgehill field was far away when the prince himself cried "Halt! sound to the standard! Stay, Walton, stay—you have outstripped me indeed."

Lord Walton drew in his rein, but he raised not his vizor,* for he felt that he was pale. "Methinks we are too far from the field, your highness," he replied: "I will ride back with speed, for my men have followed close behind me, while you rally the rest and bring them up. I fear some mischance, for the king is without guards."

"Go, go!" cried the prince, instantly perceiving the error that he had committed; "I will come after with all speed. Sound trumpets! sound to the standard!"

"Call them back, Barecolt, and follow!" exclaimed Lord Walton. "Old Randal is as mad as any of us. Bring him back quick; I fear we have spoiled the best day's deeds England has

seen for long;" and gathering together what men he could, he spurred headlong back towards the field. Captain Barecolt followed in his steps, and he thought he saw the young lord waver somewhat in the saddle; a stream of blood, too, was trickling down his scarf from his right shoulder; and spurring on his horse to a bound, he said, "You are wounded, sir—you are badly wounded—let me lead you to—"

But at that moment the field of battle came again before their eyes, and Lord Walton exclaimed, "Is this a time to talk of wounds? Look there!"

The aspect of the scene had indeed greatly changed from what it had been some half hour before, when Wilmot and Astor on the left, and Rupert on the right, were driving the Roundhead cavalry before them. Firm in his position stood the Earl of Essex with his foot. His reserve of horse had come down, and were charging the royal infantry. The right wing, the left, and the reserve of Charles's horse, were far away pursuing the flying forces; and the monarch himself, with his two sons, only guarded by a small force of mounted Cavaliers, who had been too wise and loyal to follow the rash example set them by the prince, appeared nearly surrounded by the Parliamentary cavalry under Sir William Balfour.

As Lord Walton reappeared upon the field the royal standard wavered and fell, and in the midst of the firm fire that rolled along in front of the enemy's line, he charged upon the flank of Balfour's horse to rescue his sovereign from the peril he was in. As he galloped up, however, the standard rose again, and Essex's reserve began slowly to retire upon the infantry; but still the young nobleman urged on his little troop upon the retreating force; some fifty gentlemen attached themselves from the small body that surrounded the monarch and charged in front, and cutting their way clear through, Charles Walton and Francis of Beverley met in the midst of the mêlée.

"How goes it, Charles?" cried the earl, with a glad voice. "If the prince would but return, we have a glorious victory."

"He is coming quick," replied Lord Walton: "rally your force with mine, Beverley, for one more charge;" and in another minute they were again in the midst of the retreating rebels.

At the same moment, in sad confusion and disarray, came back Prince Rupert's Cavaliers, but discipline and order was lost among them. Officers were without men, and men without officers. Some few joined the troops of Lord Beverley and Lord Walton; but night was falling; Sir William Balfour led his horse in between the regiments of infantry steadily and skilfully, then turned to face the enemy; and the earl, finding that nothing could be effected without a larger force, retreated and galloped up to Prince Rupert, who now stood near the king to urge one decisive charge upon the centre of the Parliamentary line. The prince received him coldly, however, perhaps from a knowledge that he had done amiss, and some one suggested that the king should leave the field, pointing out how firmly Lord Essex kept his ground.

"For shame! for shame!" cried the earl: "the victory might still be ours; but certainly it is not his; and as long as his majesty remains, it cannot be so. The greater part of our foot is unbroken, our horse is victorious, and whoever quits the field, I will remain upon it dead or alive."

* We do not always remember that in the reign of Charles I. the cavalry wore in general defended by casques with movable vizors—the dragoons indeed, had usually an open helmet.

"And I too, most certainly, my lord," said Charles: "I will never do so unkingly an act as to forsake them who have forsaken all to serve me. There is no look of victory on my Lord of Essex's side. We keep the field. Let them advance to attack us if they dare. Take measures to withdraw those cannon from that little mound, restore what order may be, for night is falling fast, and set a sure guard, that we be not surprised."

For some time the discharge of musketry, which was still going on, continued upon both sides; but gradually, as the darkness increased, it slackened again, fell into dropping shots, and then fires began to appear along the line of either army, while all the confusion and disarray which ever succeeds a drawn battle, where the combatants are only parted by the night, took place on either part. Hours were spent in giving some sort of order to the Royalist forces, officers sought their men, soldiers looked for their officers, rumours of every kind were spread, and many accidents and misadventures happened which cannot be told.

But there was one sad subject of thought that occupied many a mind. "Who had fallen? Who remained wounded on the field?" It was impossible to discover, for the confusion was so great that no one knew where the other was to be found. Lord Beverley, however, had seen Charles Walton almost to the last moment of the strife, and in sending off a messenger to Newington to inform his fair bride of his own safety, he ventured to add that her brother also had escaped the slaughter of that day. About midnight, however, as he was lying by a fire, he heard a step approach, and looking up, he saw Barecolt beside him.

The soldier's eyes gazed round the group which lay in the glare, and before the earl could speak he said, "So he is not here!"

"Do you mean Lord Walton?" asked the earl.

"Ay, to be sure, my lord!" replied Barecolt: "I have been seeking you these two hours; and now we had better go and seek him; for, depend upon it, he is on the field. He was badly wounded with a shot in the side in that first charge, and he got another in the last; but perhaps he is not dead yet. The night is cold, and that stanches blood."

"We have no lights," said the earl, with a cold foreboding coming over his heart. "Stay, the moon will be up in half an hour. Where saw you him last?"

"Within half a musket-shot of the second regiment, on their right," answered Barecolt. "We had better wait, too, till the moon rises. She will give some light, if she does not even chase the clouds; and yet I would fain go soon, for I have strange doubts."

"Of what?" asked the earl.

"Nay, I do not know well," replied the soldier; "but I know one thing, that sweet lady of his was not so far from the field as he wished and others thought. Just as we were moving down, I saw her or her ghost and a countryman, with his hand upon her horse's bridle, as if leading him over the rough ground on the left. Her lord saw her too, or I am mistaken, for he turned to look more than once; and there were words between him and the prince about—"

The earl put his hand to his brow in that sort of painful dread which, without taking any definite form, hangs like a dark cloud over the whole of destiny.

"You saw her near the field!" he said: "you saw her here! When was this?"

"Why, I told you, my good lord, just as we were moving down about one of the clock," answered Captain Barecolt. "But there is a little cottage where a shepherd lives, up along the edge of the hill. Perhaps she has taken refuge there, or it may be that she has gone back."

"God grant it!" said the earl. "I will send up to the cottage to see if she be there."

Barecolt, however, undertook the task himself, saying that, in such a piercing night, the walk would warm him. He found the cottage deserted, however, and though there was sufficient light to guide him back to the spot where the Earl of Beverley lay, the moon did not show herself all night, the darkness remained as profound as ever, neither lantern nor torch could be procured, and it was perfectly hopeless to attempt a search under such circumstances. Wearily hour by hour passed away beside the fire, till it died away for want of fuel, but still, notwithstanding all the fatigue that they had endured, Lord Beverley and his companion sat wakeful till the dawn of morning, and during the conversation Barecolt showed a depth of feeling and interest in the fate of Charles Walton and Arrah Neil which raised him much in the opinion of the earl. As soon as the first gray streaks announced the coming day, Lord Beverley was on horseback with his troop; but there before him stood the Parliamentary army re-enforced rather than diminished since the night before. It was impossible to approach that part of the field where Lord Walton had last been seen except with a large force, but four pieces of the enemy's artillery were seen considerably in advance of their line in that direction, and, at the suggestion of Barecolt, the earl asked and obtained leave to make a charge with his own troop and that of Major Randal to endeavour to capture some of the cannon. This, as is well known, was effected early in the morning without much loss or opposition, but the chief object of the earl, the discovery of his friend's body, could not be accomplished. The rest of the events of that day are familiar to every one. The greater part of the morning was spent in consultations on the Royalist part, and in fruitless endeavours to induce the officers to make one more great effort against the enemy, till, towards evening, both armies began to retire, the first movement of retreat being made by the Parliamentary forces, which were followed for a considerable distance by the Royalist cavalry.

For ten miles the Earl of Beverley joined in the pursuit, but then obtained leave to return to the field, and his search began. It was long-protracted, and night was again beginning to fall, when a low, fierce groan, as he walked along one of the hedges on the right, called his attention to a small pit which had been dug at the foot of a little ash-tree. A narrow path ran down among some bushes, and hurrying along it, with Barecolt and several of his men, he reached the bottom. There they found two or three wounded soldiers, who had dragged themselves thither to die, but in the midst was the saddest sight of all. Prone upon the ground, with the head uncovered, lay the body of Charles Walton, but that head was pillowed on the arm of poor Arrah Neil. Her lips seemed to have been pressed upon his, for her fair face had fallen forward upon his neck, and her bosom rested on his steel cuirass, while her left arm hung over him with

the hand half clasping the right. Beside them, gazing down upon the poor girl, with drooping ears and tail, stood the gaunt staghound, and the faithful beast turned fiercely upon the first man who approached. He recognised the earl, however, and took a step or two towards him, with a faint howl, and then returned and gazed again on her with whom he had sported in her childhood.

Lord Beverley knelt down and gently took her hand. It was cold as ice; but there was a keen frost; and he touched her cheek, removing the rich ringlets of her hair, which had fallen over her face. There was some warmth left; and raising her in his arms, he had her carried into the little town of Kineton, now in possession of the Royalist cavalry, with the body of her husband.

But Arrah never spoke again. It was evident that she had come in time to receive the last breath of him she loved, for the fingers of Lord Walton's left hand were found tightly closed upon her garments; but how she could have found him, or when, could never be discovered. All that was ever learned was, that one of the ploughmen at the farm at Newington had guided her to Edgehill, and that from the summit she had witnessed the battle below. But at night, as she would not return, the man had left her; and all the rest was darkness. Every effort was made to recall her to herself, but all were in vain; and in about two hours after she had been removed to Kineton, the last feeble spark of life that was left went out, and she was buried in the same grave with her husband in less than a week from her marriage-day.



HEIDELBERG.

A Romance.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

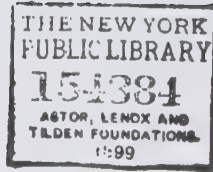
AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "ARRAH NEIL," "THE STEP-MOTHER," ETC., ETC.

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HEIDELBERG.

CHAPTER I.

THE realities of the world are few and small; the illusions many and vast. Not a sense that we possess, and hardly a faculty of the mind, but serves to deceive us; wholly in some cases, and partially in all. Yet, strip nature and life of these deceptions, and what would earth become?—what our existence here? See a small fly stepping over the irregularities of a looking-glass and thinking the polished surface but a rough and rugged plain, and we have some idea of what the world would be, if we saw it as perhaps it is.

Amongst the sweetest and most friendly deceptions, of all the many, is the landscape-painting of imagination. Love, himself, I believe, does not cheat us more, or more pleasantly. Let any traveller ask himself, when he sets eyes upon a scene which he pronounces, at once, most beautiful, how much of the loveliness is added by fancy. It may be a grand, an expansive view, over a wide and varied country; but what is the mind doing while the eye is contemplating it? Peopling it with villages—laying it out in cornfields and vineyards—filling it with busy life and gay enjoyment; not distinctly, not tangibly; but still the associations rise up in a golden mist, and spread a lustre over all. It may be, on the contrary, a narrower scene: a cottage in a deep glen, with old oaks overshadowing, and the thin blue smoke rising up amongst the green leaves. There too, the imagination busy, with the thoughts of calm retirement from a troublous world, and still, quiet contemplation—the labourer's repose after his labor—the sweet domestic home—the tender joy of tongues and faces loving and beloved.

There is but one great magician left on earth, and that is Imagination.

Reader, I very often draw from my own heart and its experience—more often than the world knows; and even now I can conceive the sensations of those two horsemen as they come at a foot pace over the edge of the hill, where the splendid valley of the Neckar, with its castled town and ancient woods, and giant mountains, first breaks upon the eye. See how the sunshine of the summer evening, softened by the light smoke of the city, pours through the long tall streets and over the high walls and towers of massive stone: see how it catches on each rocky point or prominent crag, as rounding the granite mass of the King's Seat, in its decline towards the west, it covers the brows of all his mountain peers with coronets of gold; and lo! where high raised above

the town, upon its platform of stone, stands out the lordly castle in bright light and shade. The green, green Neckar, flowing along in the midst, winds on through the long waving valley, showing ripples of gold wherever, in the sunshine, the winds stir it or the rocks obstruct, and, at each calmer spot serves as a mirror to the loveliness around; giving back the bright tints of hills and woods, and town and bridge, with a lustrous clearness no other stream can match. Even that boat, with its many coloured crew of peasantry, shines out upon the face of the river in red and blue, and white and brown, as if the very hues acquired a finer dye from the water that but reflects them; and the fishing eagle, swooping down upon its finny prey, strikes at it the more fiercely when he sees the image of himself rushing to seize it also from below.

On a fine summer evening then, in the year 1619, two horsemen, coming along the Bergstrasse, or mountain road, suddenly drew in their horses as they reached the top of that little spur of the mountain called the Heiligenberg, on which stands the village of Neunheim, and there paused, gazing, as if in wonder and admiration, at the scene presented to their eyes. For a moment or two neither spoke, for the height of every emotion is silent; and ere a word was uttered, a small party, which had followed, came up and took place behind them.

In those days great men drew their importance from the number of their attendants. 'Tis the same even now, but the display is made upon a different stage.

The horsemen who came first, however, were but accompanied by two ordinary servants, two grooms or horseboys, each leading a baggage horse heavily laden, and a page; small equipage for a man of station at that period. Nevertheless there was that about the appearance of each, which made the peasantry who passed them in numerous bodies, and in their holiday clothes, take off their broad-brimmed hats and give the strangers two looks ere they walked on. The reason why they did this was not very apparent; for the persons who thus attracted the attention of the good boors had nothing to excite admiration in their dress. It is true, indeed, gentlemen were not at that time, any more than at present, to be distinguished by their gillgaskins; but still the apparel of the two was rather plain than otherwise, consisting of a common riding suit of dark cloth, with a small line of gold, and boots and breeches of untanned leather. Their horses, indeed, were fine, powerful, spirited beasts as ever were mounted; and though the dust, that dimmed

their glossy coats, showed that they had journeyed far on a hot day, yet not a sign of fatigue was visible, and the outstretched leg, ready to start again, the high raised head, and expanded nostril, as they snuffed the air of the river, proved that they had no expectation of their day's journey being yet near an end.

There might be, indeed, some reason assigned why the country girls took a second look before they went on, for the two travellers were both young and handsome men; the one very dark, and three or four years older than the other, who might perhaps be one-and-twenty, or thereabouts, and whose face, though bronzed by exposure to sun and weather, appeared to have been originally fair, if one might judge by the clear, deep-blue eye and the rich brown hair, and moustache of that peculiar hue which shows a golden gleam when the sun shines upon it. He was tall and well formed, long in the arms, broad in the chest, and spare in the waist and flank. The head and face were small, and the features delicate, though not effeminate; the chin somewhat projecting, and the eyes large and full, with a thick and strongly marked eyebrow. When at rest the whole countenance had an expression of gravity and decision beyond his apparent years, and there was something in his air as he sat his horse, a look of command and free thoughtful power, which seemed to bespeak one who, notwithstanding his youth, had been long accustomed to regulate his own conduct and act upon his own views.

The other was very different, yet still a handsome man, much darker in complexion, not quite so tall, with a keen sharp black eye, under a wide and somewhat projecting brow, marked gracefully by a dark, arching, and somewhat raised line of eyebrow. The lips were thin, and the line from the wing of the nose to the corner of the mouth strongly marked, so as to give the ordinary expression of the countenance a slight, a very slight touch of sarcasm; and yet there was a sort of sparkling joyousness about it whenever he spoke, which we may as well notice once for all, as it was the predominant look and was exceedingly winning, although the cast of the mere features was stern and determined.

As they paused and gazed, the face of the younger and fairer of the two was full of admiration, pure, simple, and high; too deeply felt to admit even of a smile. The other gazed over the landscape too, but then for a moment turned his eyes with a half laughing glance, withdrawn as soon as given, to his companion's face, as if he and his feelings afforded as much matter for thought and examination as the beautiful scene which had just presented itself.

At length, after a pause, of about two minutes, the younger exclaimed,—

"How beautiful! how enchanting! and bursting upon us thus, it seems like magic."

"Very lovely, indeed," replied his companion, with a smile; "and I doubt not we shall find still lovelier things within those old grey walls—at least let us fancy it; for fancy is the goddess that embellishes all things, and is, even now, doing wonders in your mind, Algernon, for the fair city of Heidelberg."

"I know not what fancy has to do with it," replied the other gravely; "methinks never

was there a congregation of more beautiful objects presented to the eye of man. Nature does everything here, William, we have no need of fancy. Look at that town, that castle, those lordly mountains, those green waving woods, the river gliding—"

"Like a golden lizard, you would say, among the stones," rejoined his companion, interrupting him. "In pity let us have some figure of speech to show that your admiration has not at least benumbed imagination. A simile, a trope, a metaphor, even a hyperbole will do. Can you not call them godlike towers! or figure me the mountains as giant Titans, with a bushy beard of oaks and beeches! What has become of all your flowers of rhetoric! You will never be able to keep pace with the doctors and poets of the university, if you go on in this dull style. Or is it that you have expended all the riches of your poetry upon the fair dames you left behind in Italy, and have not got a beggarly tester of fine words for the fair town of Heidelberg! or, again, are you afraid of the exchequer running low, and are hoarding your smart speeches with miserly avarice, to let love, like the miser's son, squander them by-and-by upon the lovely dames of the Electoral court!"

"Good faith!" replied the other, "I doubt much, my friend, whether I shall see anything in any court so lovely to my eyes as that fair range of mountains, out there upon the right, looking like sapphires on a sky of gold."

"Improved! improved!" cried his companion, dropping his rein and clapping his hands; "those sapphires and that gold come out most splendidly. The poor Haardt, with her stony rocks, would be grateful to you, doubtless, for thus enriching her; but let us on, I am for living loveliness. Of all the landscapes I ever saw, the most beautiful has been a rosy cheek and alabaster throat; the brightest waters in the world for me, lie in the deep well of a dark blue eye; and in all the sunrises or sunsets that ever covered the sky with crimson, there is nothing like the warm blush, upon a young face, or the dawning smile upon a rosy lip. Let us on, let us on, I say; pleasure is the pursuit of life; let grave thoughts follow us, they will catch us soon enough if we do not make haste and get before them."

"Twere a good philosophy, could it but last," answered his companion, with a smile, twatching his horse gently with the spur, and in a moment more they were winding on by the side of the Neckar toward the old bridge, which, like many another building there, was not destined to see the present day.

Perhaps the younger of the two travellers felt that his companion was right in what he had said regarding the ornamental powers of fancy, when they passed the gates of Heidelberg and entered the town itself. The sunny splendour of the valley was lost in the narrow streets and tall dark houses; but still the shade was pleasant, for the evening was hot; and there was something in the long lines of the quaint, many-storied buildings, with their ornamented gables to the streets and every bere and there a gleam of sunshine breaking across through an aperture—something in the gay crowds of people, in the ringing laugh and cheerful buzz, even in the baskets of fruits and

flowers that obstructed every turning, which did much with a young and enthusiastic mind, to compensate for the picturesque beauty of the valley which they no longer beheld: and still, at the end of many of the streets, the towers and walls of the castle were seen looking down from its proud rock, with the green branches and ragged crags of the mountain, towering up beyond.

"In the name of all that's sweet and savoury, let us get to our inn as fast as we can," said the elder of the young men. "My ears are cracked with the hoarse merriment of these overjoyous German throats; and my nose feels feverish with all the vapours of garlic and sauerkraut which it has imbibed since we passed the gates. What is the name of the inn, Tony?" he continued, turning his head to one of the servants behind, a merry-looking fellow, with a good deal of shrewd humour in his countenance.

"The Golden something, Sir William," replied the man; "but, by my faith, I forget what. We have passed through so many golden and silver vessels within the last month, that I am quite confounded by them. We rode upon a golden goose last night; the day before it was a silver moon; then we have had the cock of gold, the golden pitcher, the golden crown, the silver cross, the silver staff, and the silver star. We have had all sorts of fishes that ever swam in the sea, and all the beasts that ever went into the ark, besides a number of monsters."

"Hush, sir, hush; give me a reasonable answer, and a short one," replied the gentleman; "and remember what your master told you about forgetting our names till you are permitted to remember them. What was the name of the inn, I say?"

"It was the Golden something, sir," replied the man, undismayed; "and, if I must give it a name when I don't recollect the right one, I'll give it the name of the Stag, by way of a change. We have not been at a Stag for a week at least."

The other gentleman smiled; for he recollected, as soon as it was named, that the hostelry to which they had been directed was really the Stag; and he somewhat doubted that his servant had ever forgotten it. "Now, then, William, to find it," he said; "for this town seems full of signs. But here comes a man on horseback,—by his dusty boots a traveller like ourselves,—German too, by the cut of his cloak and the feather on the left side of his hat. We will ask him;" and, spurring his horse forward a little, he met, at the corner of the street, a well-dressed man about thirty years of age, who was riding fast at the moment, but who checked his horse, when the other saluted him courteously and, in very tolerable German, asked the way to the Golden Stag.

"Follow me," replied the stranger, "and I will show you; I am going thither myself;" and riding on, without waiting to see whether the strangers accompanied him or not, he took his way round the great church, and sprang to the ground at the steps of a large wide rambling house, which bore, in bas relief, upon a panel in the second story, the grotesque figure of a gouty stag, gilt, and ornamented with a collar

and chain. In the centre of the house there was a large archway with steps on each side, which were also brought round the angle and all along the front on either side of the arch, forming a sort of base to the whole building. A small door—that at which the traveller halted—entered from the top of the steps, and this was thrown open as soon as his approach was perceived from one of the windows on the ground floor. At least half a score of drawers and horseboys rushed out from the various holes and corners about the building. His horse was taken with every sign of respect; and the low-bowing landlord, with night-cap in hand, the officious readiness of all the domestics of the establishment, and the reverend greeting of two men, whose badges and liveries showed them to be the liveried attendants of some high family, convinced the travellers who followed closely, that their guide to the Golden Stag was a personage of some importance in the town of Heidelberg.

The one turned round to the other and smiled, somewhat superciliously, perhaps; for the haughty contempt of other people's customs, and the national pride, which undervalues the distinctions and ranks of foreign countries to exalt those of his own, were as much characteristic of the native of a certain island in those days as at present. That supercilious smile spoke the Englishman at once. Though it would be very difficult to analyze philosophically the sensations from which it sprang, perhaps it simply arose out of contempt for the deference shown to a man, who would venture to wear a feather in a different part of his hat from that in which the English generally placed it. I do not mean to aver that it was so; but, from what I know of my fellow-countrymen, I think it very probable. Strange to say too, the countenance on which this smile appeared, was that of the elder, and to all appearance, the more experienced and worldly of the two. The other smiled not, but, checking his horse to a walk, as soon as he was aware of the position of the Golden Stag, rode slowly up to the house and dismounted, with a calm and deliberate air.

By this time the stranger had disappeared, as well as the landlord and most of the attendants; but, nevertheless, the bustle of a new arrival soon recommenced; and, in five or ten minutes more, the two travellers were lodged in large, comfortable, but somewhat gloomy rooms, and had the most positive assurance of the landlord that an excellent repast was ready to be set before them the moment they thought fit to descend to the common room and partake of it.

The servants and the page busied themselves in opening portmanteaus and saddlebags. Ruffs, collars, velvet cloaks, and laced doublets were spread out upon the large old comfortable beds. An abundance of cold water, together with the assistance of Italian essences and perfumery removed all traces of travel from their persons; and when, at the end of about half an hour, the younger of the two, with the page to show him the way, descended to the hall, it would have been difficult, perhaps, to find a more distinguished looking man within the limits of Europe. He was evidently very young—youth could be traced in every gently bowing line, in

the soft and rounded cheek, in the even, unfurrowed brow; but there was an air of stately dignity in his carriage; a calm, almost cold, firmness in the expression of his face, which showed that, from some cause—either an early initiation into life and the sad experiences of the world, or from a precocious appreciation of the realities of things—the mind was older than the man. This happens not unfrequently, and is somewhat strange in its effects; but still more strange is the result, when a triple combination takes place, as was in some degree the case with him; and when the heart, too, remains young, after the judgment has become mature, so that its passions, aided by the energies of the corporeal frame, are placed in frequent antagonism, with a powerful and overruling intellect.

The page threw open the door of a large room below, which looked somewhat dark and gloomy; for the windows were small, the panelling was of black oak, and the sun was on the other side of the house. It was not solitary, however; for there, seated in one stiff tall-backed chair, and his feet, divested of all travelling incumbrances, on another, was the gentleman whom they had met in the streets of the town, and who had served as their guide thither. His hat was cast upon a small table, his sword lay beside it, his riding-boots had been drawn off, and some time had been bestowed upon his toilet, too; for his doublet and cloak had been changed; but yet the difference of appearance produced did not seem very remarkable to an eye accustomed to the most splendid courts in Europe.

To say truth, the young Englishman had not been very much prepossessed in the stranger's favour. The brief bluff answer he had given when addressed, the manner in which he had ridden on, with hardly a look to see that they followed, seemed to him to betoken a want of courtesy, with which, indeed, he was not inclined to quarrel, but which he did not greatly admire. The other did not move when he entered either, though certainly not unconscious of his presence; for the large, clear, grey eyes were raised and fixed upon the new-comer, with a firm, inquiring, almost insolent stare. It was unpleasant to the young Englishman; but he did not come there to seek disputes; and, turning to the page who waited at the door, as if for orders, he bade him tell the landlord to serve the supper as quickly as might be, and then he walked to the window, and gazed out at the varied scene which the streets presented.

In two minutes he was lost in a reverie, forgetting altogether that there was any other being in the room but himself; and, though the other guest rose, moved his hat and sword, and walked up and down with a heavy step, the sound these evolutions produced fell upon an unconscious ear which had no power to carry them to a mind far away, busied with other things.

In about five minutes the door again opened, a quick step was heard, and the other English traveller, entering, advanced to his friend, laid his hand upon his shoulder and exclaimed, in a gay tone, "What! in the depth again, Alger-son! On my life, nature must have intended

you for an oyster. Leave you but a moment, and you sink down into an ocean of meditation, fix yourself firmly to the bottom, and would remain there, I believe, for ever, with your shell half open, waiting for what Providence would send to fill your mouth withal. But, on my faith, I have no such patience; I am like the patriarch Isaac, and have a longing for savoury meats—likewise, for some amusement. This seems a wild boar of the forest. We must force him from his lair; and he will show sport, depend upon it."

Hitherto he had spoken in English; but now, turning to the stranger, with a low and somewhat extravagant bow, and yet with an air of courtly ease, he said, in French: "We have to thank you, Monsieur, for guiding us to this inn. I trust that the host will speedily give us farther occasion for gratitude, by setting before us an excellent supper. I see he has laid three covers, from which I argue, that the enjoyment of the repast is to be heightened to us by your participating in it."

"It is my intention to sup before I go," replied the stranger, in very tolerable French, though with a haughty tone; but the other was not to be rebuffed; and, proceeding with great apparent good humour, but that sort of exaggeration of courtesy which is rarely without a touch of sarcasm in it, he soon engaged his German companion in more familiar conversation and broke through the husk of reserve, in which he had at first encased himself. His replies, when they became more frank and free, showed a mind not uncultivated, an intellect of some extent, and views in general just and powerful, though there was an alloy of haughty presumption and somewhat irritable self-esteem, which became ever more apparent, if not more offensive, as his reserve wore away.

In the midst of their conversation, the landlord and his satellites entered with the supper. Two of the travellers' servants came in to wait upon their masters; one of the attendants in livery, who had met their German companion at the door, took a place behind his chair, flatterer with ribbons and tags; and the three gentlemen applied themselves to the satisfying of an importunate appetite. After a few minutes the younger of the two Englishmen seemed to cast off his thoughtful mood, gave himself up to the gay leading of his friend, and laughed and jested likewise. The wine that was placed upon the table did not seem at all to his taste, and pushing it from him with a shudder, after the first drops had passed his lips, he pronounced it vinegar disguised.

"Come, come, mine host," he said, looking over his shoulder to the master of the inn, who had remained in the room, perhaps with a due calculation of the excellence of the beverage he had served, in its relation to the quality of his guests—for innkeepers, even then, were not unaccustomed to make their wine the measure, or aristometre, of those they entertained: "come, come, mine host, this is doubtless good wine in its way, for those whom it suits; but we have ridden far and want some more agreeable juice to refresh us. Let us have this super-excellent, the very *bride* cellar, as I think you call it here in Germany,

and mind that it be at least a hundred and fifty times better than this or else it will not do."

"You speak good German, too," said the stranger, "and seem to know our customs well, even to the tricks of our landlords. Were you ever here before?"

"Not in this good town of Heidelberg," replied the young gentleman; "but some three years ago, I passed through other parts of Germany on my way to the south. The reason why I speak French to you is, that my friend here does not understand the tongue of the country."

"Tis a pity," replied the other, "the language is a fine one, and so, methinks, strangers must find the country. I have travelled too, myself, but never saw aught finer than this our valley of the Neckar."

"Most beautiful, indeed," rejoined the young Englishman; "so much so, that I judge one might while away a day or two here very well."

"Methinks one may, or pass a life here either," rejoined their companion, with a somewhat haughty and offended air. "The court of the Elector Palatine is, I believe, second to few in Europe."

"What is that, Algernon, what is that?" cried the other Englishman, who seemed to have comprehended part of what was said; "it is treason to friendship to talk a language in my presence which is unintelligible to my poor ears."

The other gentleman explained in French; and with a smile, slightly sarcastic, his friend turned to their companion, exclaiming, "Is this court so magnificent, then, indeed? We are ignorant of this part of Europe, sir, having been long in the far south, sporting amongst princes and lazaroni at Naples, jesting with priests, cardinals, and popes at Rome, discussing pictures, statues, and points of religion with painters, philosophers, and atheists at Florence, and masking and making music with fair dames and reverend seniors in the City of the waves. We have brought over a stock of vices and small talk, I trust, that would decorate any court in Christendom; and, faith, if yours is such as you describe it, and fond of magnificence and merriment, velvet and volubility, we must go up and visit it; and, doubtless, shall be made much of, as our merits deserve."

"The access is not so easy as you may suppose, sir," answered the other, sternly; "it requires something else than a man's own account of himself to gain entrance and esteem there."

"Ha! here comes our host with a very sagacious looking bottle," cried the younger traveller, who thought, perhaps, his friend was pushing his jests somewhat too far. "If those cobwebs have been spun round the neck by thinner legs than your fingers, landlord, the wine would be as sour as cider, or of an immortal quality."

"I will warrant you, sir," answered the host, putting down long-stalked glasses, "if ever you tasted better in your days, say my name is not Rheinhardt;" and he filled up to the brim for the younger traveller and his companion.

— more the former tasted it, however, he

pressed their fellow-guest to join them and give his opinion of the wine; and, on his showing some reluctance, added: "Nay, nay, if you refuse, I shall think that you are offended with the light talk of my jesting friend there. You must bear with him, you must bear with him, sir, for it is an inveterate habit he has; and he could sooner go without his dinner than his joke, at whosever's expense it is indulged. It is the custom of the country we come from last; for there it is so dangerous to speak seriously on any subject, that men take refuge in a jest as in a redoubt."

The stranger seemed satisfied with this explanation, joined in their wine, pronounced it excellent, forgot his haughty air; and, returning to the subject which they had left, began to expatiate once more upon the beauty, splendour, gallantry, and wit of the court of the Elector, Frederic V., when suddenly a loud explosion, which seemed to shake the solid walls of the old building, and was echoed for several seconds by the rocks and mountains round, interrupted his declamation, and made the two Englishmen gaze in each other's face.

Ere they could inquire farther, another roar, and then another, was heard; and, turning to their German companion, the elder exclaimed: "In the name of our fair lady Fortune! what is the meaning of this! Is the castle besieging the town, or the town the castle? Or have you imported Mount Vesuvius to warm you here from time to time with an eruption, and preserve the antiquities of the place in ashes, pumice-stone, and sulphur?"

"Neither, my good sir," answered their fellow-traveller, who had remained totally unmoved; "it is but the guns of the castle firing in honour of the Elector's birth-day, the nineteenth of August; for on this day and hour, now three-and-twenty years ago, our noble prince was born in the good town of Amberg. There is a grand banquet at the castle to-day; but, ride hard as I would, I was too late for it, and so must content myself with going to the reception in the evening, which, they say, will be one of unusual magnificence."

"Faith, then, I think we will go there too," said the elder of the two Englishmen; "doubtless we shall see collected all the beauty of the Court Palatine."

"If you get admission," rejoined the other, drily.

"Oh, that is beyond all doubt," was the bantering reply: "your prince can never be such a barbarian as to refuse the pleasures of his court to two such proper young men as ourselves, especially as we have the honour and advantage of your acquaintance."

"I fancy you will find him sufficiently civilized to do so," said the other sharply; "and my acquaintance, sir, can only be beneficial to those of whose name and station I am informed. I may as well at once give you to understand, knowing this court, and being connected with it, that you will not be admitted unless you be properly introduced."

There was a degree of arrogance in his tone, more than in his words, that at once amused and offended the younger of the two gentlemen; and, after his companion had exclaimed, "Then must we die without benefit of society,"

he turned towards the other gentleman, saying, with a grave smile,

"We have a bad habit, sir, in England, of proving the strength of our own convictions by laying wagers on any subject of dispute. If such were the custom here, I would ask you what you will bet that I and my friend here will not go up to the castle this very night, and, without any introduction whatsoever, without naming our names, stating our rank, or disclosing our pursuits, receive kind hospitality from the elector, and pass the evening with his court."

The personage whom he addressed replied first with a laugh, and then said: "Perhaps you may find your way in, for the attendants are not likely to drive back a well dressed man; but if the elector's eye falls upon you, that of his chamberlain, or any of his high officers, you will soon be expelled, depend upon it, unless you divulge your names."

"Not so," replied the other; "I will go straight to the elector; I will refuse to divulge my name, and yet I will pass the evening there; on all which I will stake a hundred crowns. You yourself shall be the witness, as you say you are going; but, of course, it is understood that you do and say nothing to impede my proceedings."

"Done!" cried the other, striking his hand on the table; "I take your wager. Methinks I should know this court better than you can."

"I have known many courts," answered the young man, with a good-humoured laugh, "and never yet found one in which impudence and a cool face could not make its way. So now let us be friends and shake hands upon our wagers, which shall be decided as soon as you are ready."

The stranger took his hand, not very cordially, and replied: "We must wait a little; the banquet will be scarcely over yet. I would fain know, too," he added, "who are to be my companions in entering the elector's court."

"Oh! make yourself perfectly easy," replied the elder of the two young men: "you shall seem to know nothing of us from the moment you pass the gate; nay, with this sweet world's simple versatility, shall turn the shoulder coldly to those with whom you have climbed the hill the moment you have reached the top. The truth is, honourable sir, my friend and myself have resolved not to reveal our real names while travelling in these foreign lands. As a matter of course, we have each packed up with our saddle-bags and portmanteaus, a fresh and well-conditioned name for the nonce. He is called Algernon Grey: I have been known for some months past as William Lovet. We do not ask you to believe that our godfathers and our godmothers, at our baptisms, were at all familiar with these appellations, either women or penmen; nevertheless, it is a whim we have, and we request our excellent friends to humour us therein. Those who would do us reverence, tack esquire to the end of each name, to designate the lowest rank of gentlemen in England qualified to bear arms; but we are not particular, and even when that title is omitted, the bare name does very well without."

"So be it then," said their companion gravely. "You will have to ride, Master Lovet, as perhaps you know, for it is somewhat difficult to find carriages here that would drag you up that hill! But you make your boots large," he continued, playing upon an expression commonly used in Germany at that time, to express a man who stood upon little ceremony—"But you make your boots large, and therefore your hose will escape soiling. I go to get mine on;" and rising, he left the room.

The younger traveller, whom we shall henceforth call by the name he thought fit to assume, was inclined to fall into a fit of musing again; but the other leaned over the table, saying: "Ask the fellow's name, Algernon. He seems a sullen and discourteous dog, unwilling, or unable, to understand a jest."

"Good faith! you began like a young baggard, William," replied his companion, "dash-ing straight at your game, without waiting to see its flight. All men are not ready to jest with every stranger. He may have good qualities, though he seems baughty enough;" and turning to one of the attendants of the inn, he asked, in German, the name of the gentleman who had just left the room.

"That sir, is the Baron Oberntraut," replied the man, with a low reverence; "he is the only son of the master of the horse to the elector, and a captain of cuirassiers."

"What! the same who distinguished himself so much in the campaign of Juliers?" cried the young gentleman.

"The same, sir," answered the man. "He was very young then; but he did great things, I have heard."

"By my honour! he has some reason to be proud," observed Algernon Grey; "but come, William, let us get ready too. Order the horses round, Tony. I suppose they are not tired with our short march."

"Tired, sir!" replied the man. "Lord bless you! with the oats they have got into them since they came, they'd take the castle up there as if it were a five-barred gate. I heard Hob say that Barbary had eaten a peck and a half, while you were changing your cloak!"

"If that were the first lie he ever told it might be worth repeating," said William Lovet; "but let us go, Algernon. I am all on fire for the beauties of the fair Elizabeth's court; and if I can find out which is this Oberntraut's mistress, on my soul I will plague him."

CHAPTER II.

"Who is that, who is that?" cried the small shrill voice of a little deformed boy, who stood as near to the gate of the castle as the soldiers would let him—and, to say the truth, they had suffered him to approach somewhat nearer than their orders warranted, in respect for a tall, beautiful, well formed girl, his sister, who held him by the hand.

"Which do you mean, Hans?" asked his fair companion. "That one, in the black gold doublet, and the cloak lined with crim- That is the young Baron of Oberntraut."

Great Captain, who defeated the Austrians on the other side of the Rhine."

"He does not look to me like a great captain," said the small sharp voice, proceeding from the narrow and protuberant chest. "I thought he would have been all in armour, as the soldiers were once, when I saw them ride through the streets."

"Is that a Frenchman?" asked one of the lower order of students, who was leaning in studied, not to say affected negligence, with his arm round the neck of one of his fellows. "Do you see how he wears his hat! and in what a jaunty way he has thrown his cloak all upon his left shoulder, as if he wished to keep the hilt of his sword warm!"

"Oh, he may keep it warm enough in Heidelberg, if he like," rejoined the other student to whom he spoke; "we'll give it work, if it want it; but which do you mean, Frederic? for there are two of them—the black cock or the white one?"

"The fair one," replied the former speaker; "the one in the philimot and gold; he is a proper man, Carl, and, I should think, ready enough to use his rapier, if one may judge by his look."

"Oh, looks are nothing," replied the other; "but I should think he is no Frenchman. More likely an Englishman, come, like the rest of them, to flutter at our court."

"Come away, wife, come away," said a jolly, fat citizen, with an ace-of-clubs nose and a beard tolerably sprinkled with grey, to a pretty woman, some twenty years younger, who stood beside him, holding the hand of a little boy about four or five years old—"It is full time for us to be getting home; don't you see the sun is nearly down—one half behind the hills there? and it will be dark before we reach the door. There, come along; you are a great admirer of fair men, I know: but, methinks you should have had enough of them to-night; so let us homeward, if you would not have your gallant kiss his hand to you as a reward for your staring."

While this conversation and much of a similar kind had been going on amongst the numerous groups, which had assembled round the outward Burghor, or castle-gate, of the fine old palace of the Electors Palatine, the party of three gentlemen and seven servants, which had slowly wound up the long and steep ascent from the town to the castle, had reached the flat at the top, and were passing over the drawbridge, which then existed at the Burghor, into that wide extent of ground, which was inclosed by the great wall of the fortress. Whether it was that the presence of Oberntraut, who was well known to the soldiery, procured them free admission, or that the guards had only orders to keep out the ordinary citizens of the place, the whole party were suffered to proceed without opposition, and rode on to the bridge-house, while fine strains of martial music, wafted by the wind from the great court of the castle, and the sound of many a gay and musical voice from the gardens round told that the revelry of the Elector's birth-night was still going on with undiminished spirit.

Under the arch of the bridge-house, two of the guards crossed their partizans before the

horses, and Oberntraut, anxious to show that he kept his word, in not throwing any impediment in the way of the two Englishmen, turned his head, saying in German, "You must dismount here, being visitors; I ride into the court, as one of the Elector's household."

The soldiers instantly raised their halberds to let him pass with the two servants, who had accompanied him from the inn. At the same moment, one of Algernon Grey's attendants sprang to his stirrup, to aid him in dismounting; and, giving his sword to his page to carry, the young gentleman and his friend disencumbered themselves of the large riding boots of the day—which, be it remarked, easily covered shoes and all—and passing between the guards, with a confident air, as if there could be no earthly doubt of their admission, walked on, under the archway of the great square tower, into the wide court-yard.

The scene was a very brilliant one, which was now presented to their eyes. Crowds of attendants, belonging either to the household of the Elector Palatine himself, or to those of the great nobles of his court, were scattered thickly over the wide space before them—sometimes standing in groups of eight or nine together—sometimes moving hither and thither, with quick or sauntering pace; and every colour of the rainbow, in its very brightest tints, was to be seen displayed in the gorgeous costume of the day. Neither was there any lack of lace and embroidery, plumes, sword-knots and fluttering scarfs; and, around this gay flower-bed, rose up, in the faint evening light, innumerable and irregular masses of building, of every period and of every style, the remains of which can still be traced, slowly mouldering away under the hand of time, and presenting to the thoughtful eye a sad picture of the end of all great designs; a bitter lesson to man's presumptuous hopes, a dark but chastening admonition to joy, prosperity, and power.

On the right hand, under a wide arcade supported by graceful columns, was a large and skilful band of musicians, making the air ring with the sounds of their instruments. Upon the left, in darkness, such as time casts upon all man's doings, was a pile of architecture, the light and graceful lines of which betokened a very early period of construction. Nearly in the centre of the court rose up a fountain; the sparkling jets of which caught and reflected the rosy light which had spread over the sky above. Farther on, to the right, appeared a vast mass in the Italian taste, covered with rich and splendid ornaments—statues, arabesques, and pilasters—and pierced with innumerable windows, from which bright lights were shining, showing that the sun's decline was felt within. In more than one other place, too, on both sides and in front, a taper, or a lamp might be seen passing slowly on from room to room across the various casements, affording a sort of mysterious interest to a fanciful mind, as the eye of the young Englishman rested on the dark piles to the west, from which the sunshine had for several hours departed.

Grouped together near the fountain, and held by grooms and stable boys, were a number of horses, richly caparisoned; and near them was seen the form of the Baron of Oberntraut, slowly

dismounting and speaking to his two servants, as if waiting to give time for his late companions to come up.

"That is civil and honourable of him," said Algernon Grey, as they advanced toward him.

"A good deal of self-confidence in it," answered the other; "he feels so sure of winning his bet, that he wishes to prove to us that it is done by no unfair advantage."

"Still the worst side of everything!" rejoined his friend, with a grave smile, and moved on. But as soon as Obertraut perceived them within a few yards, he himself advanced toward a flight of steps before one of the principal buildings, where an open door and a blaze of light, displayed a low arched hall, crowded with attendants. His step was slow and stately, but though, before he had reached the top of the steps, the two Englishmen were close to him, he took not the slightest notice of them, and passed on.

Several other persons were, at the moment, advancing in the same direction; and Lovet whispered to his companion; "Follow the stream, follow the stream." Algernon Grey did so, and found himself guided by the rest to what seemed the great staircase of the castle. It was not indeed so magnificent, either in its proportions or its decorations, as the splendour of the exterior might have led a traveller to expect; but what it wanted in architectural beauty was supplied by extrinsic decoration of great taste, consisting of flowers and shrubs and branches disposed in such manner as to mingle the harsh lines of the grey stone pleasantly and symmetrically with the graceful bends of the green foliage. An object had been sought and attained very much neglected in those times, namely, the perfect lighting of the staircase; for, although the day had hardly closed, the lamps were already gleaming along the balustrades, not with a harsh and overpowering glare, but with a tempered brightness, which showed all that could please and captivate the eye and yet left a dim indistinctness, not disagreeable, over the rest. Five or six persons preceded the young Englishmen in their ascent, some speaking together, some silent and lonely; but all turned to the left on reaching the top, and passed through a guarded door, round which a number of attendants were standing, into a small anti-chamber, where a single officer appeared leaning his hand upon a table.

No questions were asked of any of those who went before Algernon Grey and his friend; and he with calm and grave deliberation followed, neither looking to the right nor the left, nor taking the slightest notice of a whispered inquiry, which he heard running amongst the servants, as to who and what he was. William Lovet, in his ignorance of the language, was also ignorant of all such perils to their enterprise; and, with a gay and well assured look, followed close upon his companion's steps, adjusting the glittering tie of his sword-knot and thrusting his rapier a little farther back.

The moment they entered the anti-room, Algernon Grey marked that the Baron of Obertraut paused for an instant at the opposite door, as if to see whether the officer on duty would stop them, or require their names. The latter immediately advanced a step or two; but then,

to the surprise of all present, he gave the two gentlemen a lowly salutation, and drew back to the table again.

A slight smile curled Algernon's handsome lip; and, with a tone of dignity, he said aloud, addressing the officer: "Will you be pleased, sir, to inform the Elector Palatine personally, if you can have his ear for a moment, that two English gentlemen of befitting rank, who for reasons of their own decline to give their names, crave his gracious permission to witness the splendours of his court this night; and to tread a measure in his hall with the fair dames of our own fair princess. We ask it with loyal hearts and true, well aware of what we do, and not venturing to request unjustly becoming of him to grant, or us to accept."

The officer bowed, and, turning towards those without, said: "Keep the door!" and then, advancing towards the inner chamber, seemed to answer quickly a question of Obertraut, who had lingered near the entrance, and then passed on.

"Now are your hundred crowns in peril, Algernon," said William Lovet; "a fair new saddle-cloth embroidered in gold, a silver bit and gilt stirrups, together with an ear-ring of nineteen carats and a ruby, to say nothing of a new kerchief to Madge, Marianne, or Margery, all hang upon the chance of the fair delivery of a simple message by an anti-chamber officer of an Elector Palatine. Heaven save the mark! if the pretty maid with the brown eyes, who was likely in the course of time and by the concatenation of circumstances, to have that kerchief at your hands, now knew upon what a rash cast you have risked it, would she not fret and scold at the probable result of the bet at the Golden Stag?"

"She would be silly so to do," replied Algernon Grey. "I have no fears of money going out of my purse to-night; the good man will deliver his message aptly enough, I am sure; and the message, of which you understand not a word, was just the bait to catch the young Elector with his notions of chivalrous gallantry. Hark, what a buzz comes through the doorway. Methinks half the palatinate must be here; and see how the figures glide about across and across—now in blue and silver—now in green and gold—now in black and pearls, like painted shadows in a showman's box. But here comes our messenger, and with him a very grave and reverend personage with a beard of an ell long. Let us advance to meet him, as if we knew his inward dignity at once by his outward shape."

With the same stately carriage which he had lately assumed, Algernon Grey took a few slow steps forward, to meet a somewhat corpulent gentleman, whose hair and coloring seemed to bespeak a hasty and choleric temperament, and then made him a low bow. The officer, who had been in waiting in the anti-chamber, pointed with his hand to the two Englishmen, saying: "These are the two gentlemen;" and the other, who followed, returned their salutation, scanning them for a moment with his eye ere he spoke.

"It is the Elector's pleasure, sirs," he said length, "that I introduce you to his presence; and once more he gazed at them from head

foot, in a somewhat haughty and supercilious manner.

But Algernon Grey was not to be provoked out of his caution; and, with a very slight inclination of the head, he replied: "The Elector is gracious; we are at your command."

There was nothing more to be said; and therefore the Electoral officer wheeled his large person round, and, with a somewhat more civil gesture than he had hitherto used, led the way into the chamber beyond. It was filled with numerous persons of both sexes, dressed in the gorgeous costume of the day; and certainly the court of the mightiest monarch in Europe could not have displayed greater splendor of apparel, or greater beauty of person, than appeared at that of the Count Palatine. People of all nations and all languages were there; and amongst the busy crowds which moved hither and thither, every hue of hair, every shade of complexion was to be seen; from the fair-haired, blue-eyed children of the north, to the dark Transylvanian, and the swarthy Moor. Through all the throng the chamberlain of the Elector cleared a way for himself and the two who followed: the rotundity of his person acting as a sort of human wedge, which left a vacancy behind it; and many a head was turned to gaze upon the young strangers; it being remarked that they looked neither to the right nor the left, as if they did not wish to recognise or be recognised by any one, should there, by chance, be found an acquaintance amongst the varied multitude.

Although the immense masses of the castle, as they had seen it from the outside, had impressed them with a strong idea of its vastness, yet, from some cause or another, Algernon Grey had expected to find the Elector and his fair wife in the room beyond the anti-chamber. Indeed its extent was so great, its decorations so sumptuous, and the groups it contained so numerous, that it might well have been supposed the audience-hall of a great prince. But everything in the castle of Heidelberg, at that period, was upon so magnificent a scale, that no acquaintance with other palaces enabled a visitor to judge of what was to be his reception here. It contained, in those days, a suite of ten splendid saloons, one opening into the other, and each covered with lavish ornament. Through the whole of these, till at length they reached what is called the silver chamber, the two young Englishmen were led, before they found the object of their search.

Two pages, one stationed on each side of the wide door way, held up the curtains of white velvet and silver, which hung from huge rings above; and as Algernon entered, a more quiet scene than those he had just passed, but still a very striking one, presented itself to his eyes. At the farther side of the room, perhaps at a distance of forty or fifty feet, standing a little in advance of two chairs of state, were seen Frederic and the Electress, both in the pride of youth and beauty. The features of neither were perfectly regular, but the face of each had its own peculiar charm of expression, the one beaming with graceful kindness and dignified good humour, the other sparkling with wit, imagination, and soul. Strikingly, though not

regularly handsome, certainly they were; and seeing them standing there, clothed in similar colors, of the same age, slightly contrasted complexion, with only that difference in height which might well exist between the husband and the wife, one might have been tempted to think that no two people had ever been more fitly matched, had but the countenance of Frederic possessed more energy and determination of character. Elizabeth stood on her husband's right hand; and on his left were seen first a page, holding his sword, and then a group of the glittering nobles of his court; but on the right of the Electress, were assembled twelve or thirteen of the fairest flowers of Christendom, all robed nearly alike in white and silver; their marble brows and glossy hair bound with garlands, as it were, of diamonds and pearls. In other parts of the room—near the windows—near the doors—under the arches on either side, were several other groups conversing in a low tone; but the middle was vacant, at least when Algernon Grey entered; and he was advancing after his guide, towards the young sovereign before him, when suddenly, from a group on his right, a glittering courtier of about his own age started forward, and held out his hand.

The visitor, however, placed his finger on his lip, saying in a low tone, "Not a word, Craven,* we are to be as strangers here."

The other instantly drew back again, with a smile; but William Lovet nodded to him gaily, and then followed his friend.

This little interlude had not caught the Elector's eye, for at that moment the Baron of Oberntraut passed before him, and bowing low, took his place amongst the gentlemen on the left.

Elizabeth, however, saw it, and smiled, and then whispered a word in her husband's ear. Frederic's eyes were immediately turned upon the young Englishmen, who were now within a few paces; and a look of pleasure came over his countenance, while he replied in a low tone to what his wife had said.

The next moment the chamberlain interposed with a low and formal bow, saying, "These are the gentlemen, your Highness; I know not how else to introduce them to you, as they do not think fit to grace me with their names; but your pleasure being that they should have admittance, I have obeyed you in bringing them to your presence." This said in a grave and formal tone, he drew back upon the prince's left.

"You are welcome, gentlemen," said Frederic. "Though you deny your name—and we will let that pass unquestioned—we must, as sovereign of this land, inquire what brings you hither: having due regard for the safety of our subjects, to the fairer part of whom, methinks, you might prove dangerous."

While he spoke, a playful and good-humoured smile curled his lip; and Algernon Grey answered in a respectful but yet gay tone; "I must reply to your Highness with one of our English players,—

'A roving disposition, good my lord.'

* By some authors it is stated that Craven was not at this time at the electoral court; but of course the chronicle which we copy is the better authority.

Such was the evil cause that brought us to the fair Palatinate. Being there, we heard that this day your Highness held a high revel, and, longing to see the wonders of this court, we ventured hither, craving leave to tread a measure with any fair dame who will so honour us."

"I fear me much," said Frederic, in the same tone of courteous jesting, "that you are two perilous young men."

"He, my lord, is perilous young," replied Lovet, pointing to his companion; "God send that I may have a good title to the same character for the next twenty years; but, I doubt me much, it is passing away from me."

"We are all upon a road where there are no inns," answered the Elector, somewhat more gravely; "but what I fear is, that you bring danger with you, and I doubt much that I must order you into confinement, unless you can find bail and surety."

"Nay, my good lord, I will be their bail," cried Elizabeth of England gaily; "and to make all sure, I will put them in gentle ward, so that they commit no offence while in your dominions. — Here, Agnes," she continued, "and you, my fair Countess of Lausnitz, you shall be their warders, and remember, that, throughout this whole night, whether in the dance or at the table, in the halls or in the gardens, you lose not sight of your several prisoners for a moment. Stay," she continued, "although my good lord is inclined to treat them thus severely, I will be more gentle, as becomes a lady, and let each choose into whose captivity he will fall. What say you, sir?"

"By your Highness's gracious permission," replied Algernon Grey, to whom her words were addressed, "as there can be no want of gallantry in a choice where I know neither, I will surrender myself to the lady you first mentioned."

"That is you, Agnes," said the Electress; "come forward and take possession of your prisoner."

As the princess spoke, a young lady, who stood a little behind, advanced with a light step, but with some slight timidity of manner, and a cheek more flushed than it was the moment before. The timidity, however, appeared but to add new grace to that which, even before, seemed perfect; and Algernon Grey gazed upon her in evident surprise and admiration, feeling himself right happy in his choice.

It is very difficult to convey in language any just idea of those various distinctions and shades of beauty, which the eye seizes in a moment, but which escapes from words; and it would be almost doing injustice to the fair girl, who now approached the princess's side, to attempt a detailed description. To give some idea, however, of her person, as the portraits, still existing, represent her, it may be enough to say, that she was certainly not above the middle height, but with every limb so exquisitely formed, that she looked taller than she really was. Her rich brown hair, with chestnut gleams upon it, fell in profuse abundance down her neck, in the fashion of the day. Her eyes were neither blue, nor brown, nor grey, but of that soft and soul-speak-

ing hazel, so rarely seen and yet so exquisitely beautiful; while the long dark eyelash and arched brow lent themselves to every shade of expression, from deep and pensive thought to light and sparkling gaiety. The features were all small and delicate, the skin pure as alabaster, with a sunset glow upon her cheek. And the slightly parted lips, showing the pearly teeth beneath, seemed tempting love and promising return. The small, fine hand, the beautifully formed foot and ankle, the graceful neck and swelling bosom, the very turn of the head, all seemed like the dream of a sculptor in some moment of inspiration. And to crown all, was that breathing of the soul through every feature and through every part, which invests each movement with some new charm.

Algernon Grey gazed upon her, I have said, with a look of admiration and surprise; and the keener and shrewder eye of William Lovet, too, ran over her face and figure, but with a very different expression. It lasted but for a moment, and then he turned his gaze upon his friend, marking well the gleam of surprise that sparkled on his countenance. A slight smile curled his lips; but when Algernon Grey advanced and took her hand, at the Princess's command, those lips moved; and, had any one been near, he might have heard him say, in a low tone, "This will do, methinks."

Another eye, too, marked the whole proceeding; but, in this instance, the brow became clouded, the moment the young Englishman's hand touched that of his fair companion; and, setting his teeth hard in his lower lip, the Baron of Obertraut turned away his head, as if not to expose the discontent which was too plainly written on his face.

"I am ready, may it please your Highness," said William Lovet, advancing as soon as Algernon and his partner had drawn back, "to submit myself entirely to your high commands; but I do beseech you to lighten my chains by making them of roses, and bidding my fair gaoler issue her orders in French, English, or Italian, as I fear my purse is very empty of German coin; and if she have none other, the exchange would be much against me."

"Fear not," replied the Princess; "we all speak French here. Come, fair Countess, take your prisoner, treat him well, but watch him carefully; and, to amuse his sad hours of captivity, show him all that is worth seeing in our humble court."

The lady to whom she spoke was in the first rank of those on her right; and William Lovet had no cause for dissatisfaction with his fate for the evening. The lady was tall and fair, but sparkling with beauty and youth; and a merry mouth, a sleepy and love-languid eye presented to his imagination all those qualities best suited to his taste. He was speedily in full career of jest and gallantry with his fair companion, and seemed at first to make more progress with her than Algernon Grey could boast with his partner for the night.

After a pause of a few moments, the Elector turned to the Marshal of his household, and asked if any more guests were arriving or expected. The reply was "None;" and waving his hand, the Prince said in a gay tone; "Then, let us break off our state, and, for an hour or

two, enjoy ourselves with the rest. Lords and ladies, to your several pastimes; and, according to a proverb, which I learned in England, let us all be merry and wise."

Thus saying, he drew the arm of the Electress through his own, and moved towards the doors of the hall. His departure was a signal for the dispersion of the court; the ceremonial part of the evening's occupations was at an end; and—ranging through the long suite of rooms which had been thrown open, going forth into the gardens and terraces—in general brightly illuminated by painted lanterns—some seeking the dance, some conversation—each endeavoured to amuse himself as best he might upon that night of festivity and rejoicing.

CHAPTER III.

THE fate that hangs over the death-doomed race of man appals us not. We wander where generations have grown up and bloomed, borne fruit, and passed away, without a homily in our hearts; we tread upon the very graves of a thousand races, we walk over the huge burial place of the world, and give not a thought to the fellow dust that sleeps below. Strange and marvellous insensibility! whence does it spring! Is it from mere levity that we thus rise above the deep thoughts of our inevitable doom? Or is it from a high sense of loftier destinies, an intimate conviction of the imperishable elevation of one part of our mixed nature? Or is it indeed—more likely than either—that while we see the spring of life still gushing forth and pouring out stream after stream as each river is dried up, a consciousness steals over us that we are but the parts of one beautiful whole undergoing everlasting change to the glory of Him who made it all! We behold creation full of life: the herb, the flower, the beating heart, the pliant fin, the soaring wing, the thought-stored brain, all speak of that strange mysterious fire which warms the universe, bursting out wherever eye can reach or fancy penetrate, unextinguished, unextinguishable but by the will that called it into being. We see, and know it; and, instinct with the divine essence, rejoice in the light that is granted, for the time that it can be enjoyed, while the promise of its permanence and the hope of its increase shade over the one dark moment with a veil of gold.

Amidst buildings, that are now ruins, through scenes that are in a great part desolate, over terraces and amongst parterres, now no longer to be seen, was kept up, throughout that night, revel and merriment and joy, without a thought given to the ages passed away, or to those who had been denizens of earth and partakers of all earth's pleasures, upon that same spot for unnumbered centuries before. The present hour, the present hour! the joy of the existing short-lived moment! the taste of the ripe fruit, without the cloud of the past or the sun of the future! were then, are still, and may be for ever hereafter, the sole occupation of the gay and happy spirits, such as the guests there assembled.

It was too much so indeed; for, in those young days of bright domestic happiness, Elizabeth of England and her joyous, lighthearted

husband drained to the dregs the joy-cup of prosperity and power; and, educated in the ideas of, though differing in views from the queen of James the First, the Electress was strongly tinged with those notions of freedom bordering upon levity, which were entertained by Ann of Denmark. Not that I mean for one moment to cast a stain upon a name, with which history has dealt justly, I believe, in dealing tenderly; but it is undoubted, that the Electress, if sufficiently reserved in her own manners, and perfectly pure in her own conduct, gave great encouragement, in the court of her husband, to that abandonment of ordinary and conventional restraints, which can only be safe amongst the highminded and the chivalrous, and not always even then. She held with Ann of Denmark, that women had as much right, and might be as safely trusted with the entire and unwatched direction of their own actions, as men; that those harsh restrictions and suspicious guardianships, which have grown out of a complicated and artificial state of society, might well and wisely be dispensed with; and that the sole cause of there being any danger to woman herself, or to the world in general, from allowing her the same freedom, which man monopolizes, was the early restraint, which denied experience as the guide of reason and the demonstration of principle.

Thus a degree of freedom—I will not call it license, for that is a harsh term, and implies, according to modern acception, much more than I mean—reigned in the electoral court; and, although more than seven hundred guests were there assembled on the night I speak of, in addition to the noble part of a household numbering constantly more than a thousand members, no one, unless from some private and peculiar reason, thought it in the least necessary to watch the proceedings of others, whether male or female. Doubtless the Electress was right in many of the views she maintained, abstractedly speaking; but unfortunately it happens, that to every theory, however just in itself, certain small practical circumstances oppose themselves, affecting its application most momentously. I will illustrate, in some degree, what I mean. Formerly, in the silver mines of Spain, as at present in the soil of Illyria, I believe, a certain mineral was to be found very much resembling silver in colour—weighty, bright, and fluid. Taken in its native state, it is innocuous and very inefficient; but add a few drops of a certain nearly colorless acid to it, and it becomes a valuable medicine; add a few drops of another acid, and it becomes the most virulent of poisons. Now the small circumstances, for which no allowance is ever made, are the few drops of acid, which in the furnace of the world render the most innocent theory possible, either highly beneficial, or terribly pernicious. I speak not, of course, of principles, for they are fixed; but merely of theories at first sight indifferent.

However, such as I have stated, was the Court of the Elector Palatine in the year one thousand six hundred and nineteen, and in the month of August in that year; a period pregnant with great events, when the fate of the Palatinate—nay, the fate of Europe—nay, immeasurably more, the progress of *civilization* was

the march of the human mind throughout the whole world, hung trembling in the balance; and yet there they were, the gay, the light-hearted, the enthusiastic, the moveable, all, apparently, creatures of impulse alike, enjoying with less restraint, than the world had often seen before, the happiness of the present hour. Music and the dance, gay conversation, light jest and playful wit had excited heads and hearts alike. The heat of the saloons had become oppressive; the glare of the lamps and tapers had dazzled and fatigued the eyes; the moving objects, the brilliant dresses, the beaming jewels, the straining race after pleasure, had become fatiguing to many; and some forty or fifty pairs, hand in hand, or arm in arm, had wandered out to seek the refreshing coolness of the gardens, to repose the mind, and invigorate the body in the fresh night air of August, or else to tell the tale of love and seek its return, under the broad green foliage of the trees, or the twinkling eyes of the deep blue sky of night.

Algernon Grey and his fair companion stood side by side in one of the deep windows of the hall where they had trod one dance, and he marked the disappearance of many, who had been for some time in the same chamber, by doors which he knew not whither. Had the lady remained as timidly distant as when first they met, perhaps he might have asked no questions in regard to a subject which only excited a slight and passing curiosity; but a change had come over them both.

It was seldom that Algernon Grey felt embarrassment or hesitation in addressing the brightest or the fairest in the world. From a period, generally reckoned within the round of boyhood, he had acted for himself, except in some matters of deep moment; and, in regard to those, the arrangements which had been made for him by his friends, had, by fixing his fate, in several of its most important features, irrevocably placed him beyond the circle of many events most fraught with emotion for the heart of youth. But yet, there is something very impressive in great beauty, especially in its first early dawn.

With the mature woman, there are a thousand avenues opened by her own experience, to approach her fearlessly, if honestly. But the mind of a very young girl, like the first bud of a rose, is hedged in by thorns, through which we must force our way. In one of the German editions of a fairy tale, called the "Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," the knight, who is destined to deliver the lady, has first to cut his path through the forest before he can even approach the castle in which she lies slumbering; and he never would have succeeded, had it not been for an enchanted sword given him by a kind friend. I cannot help thinking, that in the allegory, the Sleeping Beauty meant the confidence of a young and inexperienced heart; and the sword which none of the trees could resist, a high and noble spirit, possessed by one who sought to approach it. With such a sword Algernon Grey was armed; and, although he found some difficulty in choosing his path, fortune befriended him at length. After two vain efforts which produced nothing in reply, but those common-places, which showed that the lady was accustomed, more than her years

would have induced him to expect, to courts and the world, he hit upon a happier theme, which obtained a longer answer and touched deeper feelings. He had spoken of the Electoral court, he had spoken of the fair Palatinate, he had spoken of the Elector and Electress. Her replies were courtly, but from the surface. He then spoke of England, of his own land, of the qualities of the people, their truthfulness, their energy of character; and she warmed in an instant. She often longed to see it, she said. She told him that it was the cherished vision of her lonely moments, the hope of her heart, the only eager and anxious desire she had; and when he expressed his surprise that the distant island from which he came, could have awakened such interest, she asked with a smile:—

"Do you not know that I am an English-woman? I have never seen England, I have never known it; but yet I am English-woman."

"Indeed," he said, instantly changing the language in which they had been speaking to his own; "of English parents, you mean? I can well conceive the land of our ancestors possesses a deep interest for any one born afar, but yet, fair lady, you must be somewhat of an enthusiast, also, to say that it is the only hope of your heart!"

"Perhaps I am," she answered with a smile. "but yet there is something more in the thought of England, than the mere clinging of the heart to the place of a long ancestry. Her very insulated situation seems to impose upon her children, as a duty, to limit, in a degree, their wishes and their feelings to the bounds of her sea-washed shores. There is an interest in her solitary grandeur amongst the waves. Then too, she has ever been the island-throne from which a long race of mighty kings has shaken the destinies of all other lands, and ruled or changed a world. History is full of England. It seems, to my eyes, as if hers were the pervading spirit of all past chronicles—as if, like an awful spectre, her image was always present amidst the festivals and feuds of other states. Calm, grand, and sublime, she treads the waters of earthly strife; and, while others are contending for petty trifles amongst themselves, losing one day, winning another, the power and glory of England marches on, if not unchecked, only the greater for each temporary reverse. Freedom is her birth-right; home joys and rural peace her ornaments; arts, arms, and poetry, the coronet on her brow. Oh! it is a glorious land, indeed, and let them call us proud, if they will! Thank God! we have something to be proud of."

Her eyes sparkled, her colour rose, her whole face beamed with animation as she spoke; and Algernon Grey gazed at her with an admiring smile. Perhaps he might fear that under the monarch then on the English throne, their country might lose, for a time, that high position in which her fancy had placed it; but, at all events, the few words then spoken broke down at once all cold barriers of reserve between them; and from that moment they went on pouring forth the thoughts of their hearts to each other, as if long years of intimacy had linked their minds together.

"Whither are all these people wending, that I see depart?" asked Algernon Grey, at length, as he marked the gradual thinning of the rooms. "I trust this bright evening is not coming to a close!"

"Oh, no," she answered, "not for hours. They are going to the gardens, I suppose, or anywhere they like. This is a free and liberal place, fair sir, where each one does as he thinks fit, and others mind him not."

"I would fain see these same gardens," said her companion, "if they be within the bounds of my imprisonment."

"Come, then," she said, "why should we not? These rooms are very warm, too; and we shall find fresher air without. Through that door, and then down the stairs, will lead us out by the library-tower, amongst the flowers and the green trees."

As she spoke, they moved towards the door, so which she pointed; and they had nearly reached it, when the Baron of Obertraut crossed their path, and suddenly paused before them.

"I have lost my bet, sir," he said, in a somewhat sharp tone, "and will send you the amount of your inn to-morrow."

"Oh, it matters not," answered Algernon Grey; "it was a foolish wager of mine, and I can hardly call it fairly won: for I suspect, by a smile I saw on your Prince's lip, that he remembers having seen me in my own land, though I was but a mere boy then."

"I always pay my debts of all kinds, sir," replied the other; and then, turning to the lady, he asked her to tread a measure with him, when the dance began again.

"I cannot, noble sir," she replied coldly; "I have a task assigned me, which I must perform. You heard the commands I received."

"Commands right willingly obeyed," answered Obertraut; and, turning sharply away, he left them.

"He is in an ill humour," said Algernon Grey, as, passing through two or three rooms nearly deserted, they reached the top of a small staircase, that led down towards the gardens. "He reasonably enough made me a bet, that I would not obtain admission here, without announcing my name or rank. I unreasonably proffered it, and, against probability, have won."

"He is more wounded," answered Agnes, "at his judgment having been found in fault, than at the loss of the wager, be the amount what it will. He is a liberal, free-hearted gentleman, whom success, high birth, and flattery have rendered somewhat vain; but yet, from all I hear and all I have ever seen, I should judge that at heart there are few nobler or better men now living."

Algernon Grey mused for a moment; he knew not why, but her words gave him pain; and they passed out, in silence, into the gardens, then newly laid out by the famous Salomon de Caux. Nothing that profuse expense and the taste and science of the day could effect, had been left undone to render those gardens a miracle of art. Mountains had been thrown down; valleys had been filled up; streams had been turned from their course; terraces, above terrace, parterre beyond parterre, fountains, grottoes, statues, arcades, formed a scene somewhat stiff and formal, in-

deed, but of a gorgeous and splendid character; whilst, sweeping round, as if covering them with a green mantle, came the mountains and forests of Neckarthal. There were lamps in many places, but such artificial light was little needed; for the moon, within a few days of her full, was pouring a flood of splendour over the scene, which showed even minute objects around. So bright and beautiful was it, so white was the reflection from leaves and gravel walks, and the fresh stone-work of the garden, that, had not the warm air told the presence of summer, Algernon Grey might have fancied that snow had fallen since he entered the castle gates.

Numerous groups of persons were wandering hither and thither; and the very colours of their clothing could be seen under the beams of the bright moon. Among the very first of the gay parties, which passed the young Englishman and his companion, as they walked along the upper terrace, towards the broad flight of steps that led down into the lower garden, was his gay friend, William Lovet, walking with the lady who had been assigned as his guide through the night. Right merry they both seemed to be; and we may as well follow them for a moment or two, to show the contrast between Lovet and his fellow-traveller.

"Love and constancy," cried Lovet, with a laugh, just as they passed Algernon Grey, "two things, dear lady, perfectly incompatible. The very essence of love is in change; and you know in your heart that you feel it. It is but that you wish to bind all your slaves to you by chains of iron, while you yourself roam free."

"Chains of brass would suit such an impudent man as you better," answered the lady, in the same gay tone; "but I can tell you, I will have no lovers who will not vow eternal constancy."

"Oh! I will vow," answered Lovet, "as much as you like; I have got a stock of vows, which, like the fountain of the Nile, is inexhaustible, and ever goes on swelling in the summer; I'll overflow with vows, if that be all; I'll adjure, protest, swear, kneel, sigh, weep, and vow again, as much as any true knight in Christendom. You shall believe me as constant as the moon, the sea, or the wind, or any other fixed and steadfast thing—nay, the moon is the best image, after all; for she, like me, is constant in inconstancy. Still hovering round the planet of her love, though she changes every hour; and so will I. I will love you ever dearly, though I vary with each varying day."

"And love a dozen others every day," answered the lady, laughing.

"To be sure," he cried; "mine is a large and capacious heart; no narrow peasant's crib, which can contain but one. Fit on such penalty! I would not be such a poor pitiful creature as to have room but for one fair friend in my bosom, for all the riches of Solomon, that great king of innumerable wives and wisdom super-excellent. For me, I make it an open profession; I love the whole sex, especially while they are young and pretty."

"You are laughing at me and trying to tease me," exclaimed the lady, piqued and yet pleased; "but you cannot do it, and never

shall. You may think yourself a very conquering person; but I set no value on love that, like a beggar's garment, has fitted thousands in its day, and must be patched and ragged."

"Good as new, good as new!" cried Lovet, "without break or flaw. The trials it has undergone but prove its excellence. Love is of adamant, polished but not broken by use. But you dare me, dear lady—you defy me, methinks. Now that is a bold and courageous act, and we will see the result. No fortress so strong but it has some weak point, and the castle that fires off its ordnance at the first sight of an enemy, is generally very much afraid of being taken by surprise. The little traitor is busy at your heart, even now, whispering that there is danger; for he knows right well that the best means of reducing a place is to spread a panic in the garrison."

In the mean while, the very name of love had only been mentioned once, between Agnes and Algernon. Their minds were busied, especially at first, with aught else on earth. He certainly thought her very beautiful; more beautiful, perhaps, than any one he had ever seen; but it was rather as an impression than a matter of reflection. He felt it, he could not but feel it; yet he did not pause upon the idea. For her part, neither did she think of his personal appearance. His countenance was one that pleased her; it seemed expressive of a noble heart and a fine intellect; she would have known him out of all the world, if she had met him years afterwards and had only seen him then but once. Yet, had she been asked to describe his person, she could not have told one feature of his face. When they reached the bottom of the flight of steps, they paused and looked up to the castle, as it stood upon its rock above, with the enormous masses and towers standing out dark and irregular in the moonlight sky; while the hills swept in grand variety around, and the valley opened out beyond, showing the plain of the Rhine flooded with moonlight.

"This is, indeed, magnificent and beautiful," said Algernon Grey. "I have seen many lands, and, certainly, never did I think to behold in this remote and untravelled part a scene which eclipses all that I ever beheld before."

"It is very beautiful," answered Agnes; "and although I have been a tenant of that castle now many a year, I find that the fair land in which it lies, like the society of the good and bright, only gains by long acquaintance. To me, however, it has charms it cannot have to you. There dwell those I have loved best through life, there all who have been kind to me in childhood: the protectors of my infancy, the friends of my youth. It has more to me than the scene and its beauties; and when I gaze at the castle, or let my eye run along the valley, I see through the whole the happy home, the pleasant place of repose. Faces of friends look out at me from every window and every glade, and loved voices sound on every breeze. They are not many; but they are sweet to my heart."

"And I, too," answered Algernon Grey, "though I can see none of these things that you can see, behold much more than the mere lines and tints. As I entered the court but an

hour or two ago, and looked up at the various piles that crowded round, some in the freshness of a holiday youth in his best clothes sent home from school, some in the russet livery of age, and some almost crumbling to their earth again, I could not but picture to myself the many scenes which those walls have beheld; the loves, the hopes, the pleasures, the griefs, the disappointment, the despair, the troublous passions, the calm domestic joys—even the pleasant moments of dreamy idleness, and the phantasm-forming hours of twilight—all that the past has seen upon this spot seemed to rise before me in tangible forms, and sweep across in long procession with smiles and tears alternate on their cheeks; and all the while the musicians under the stone canopy appeared in their gay and spirit-stirring tones to read a curious comment on the whole."

"What might their comment be?" asked the lady, gazing up in his face with a look of interest.

"They seemed to say," he answered, "Joy thou too, young heart! All is transient, all are shadows. Taste thy morning in its prime. Be thy noontide firm and strong, strew thine evening path with flowers, embrace the right, eschew the wrong, and fear not when the coming hours shall gather thee to join that train which sweeps along."

"Why, it is verse!" cried Agnes, smiling.

"Not quite," he answered, "but so fancy made their sounds, words; and the cadence of the music added a sort of measure."

"'Twas sweet counsel and good of that kind dame, Imagination," rejoined the fair girl, "and yet, though the command was to be gay, your words, fair sir, are somewhat sad."

"Let us be gay, then," he replied.

"With all my heart," she cried; "but what shall we be gay about?"

"Nay, if we have to search for a theme, better be as we are," answered the young Englishman, "nature is ever best; the mood of the moment is the only one that is worth having, because it is the only one that is true. It will change when it is time. But you are by nature gay, is it not so?"

"Oh, yes!" she answered, "I am gay as a free bird. Nay, good Dr. Scultetus, the court chaplain, would persuade me often I am light—but methinks not that; for I have felt many things long and deeply."

"And amongst them, love?" asked her companion.

"Oh, yes!" replied she, in a frank yet playful tone, "I have loved deeply and truly."

Algernon Grey was silent for a moment. He would have given much to have asked, "Whom?" but he did not venture, and the next instant the beautiful girl went on in a tone that reproved him for the question he had put.

"I have loved my parents," she said, "deeply and well—though one of them I cannot remember—I have loved my friends—I do love princess."

"It was not of such love I spoke," answered, gazing down at her earnestly.

"Then, I know no other," she replied, "you?"

"Oh, yes, many," he said, laughing; "is a warmer, a more sparkling, I might

call it, a fiercer kind of love, which every man, who has mingled a good deal in the world, must have seen in its effects, if he have not experienced it in his person. But I am not in a confessional," continued he, "and so I shall say no more."

"And yet you would put me in one," she answered gaily; "but certainly when I go there, I will have a more reverend father-confessor; for methinks, you are given to asking questions, which I may not be inclined to answer."

Her companion paused in meditation during a moment or two: for her words raised a certain degree of doubt in his mind, as to whether she belonged to the Protestant or to the Catholic party, who, at the time I write of, lived together in the various towns of Germany, rather enduring than tolerating each other. It seemed a night of frankness, however, when questions might be easily asked, which would be impertinent at a graver and more reserved moment; and he demanded, at length, in a light tone: "Pray, tell me, before I say more, are you one of those who condemn all Protestants to fire and faggot here and in the other world, or of those who think the power of the Pope an intolerable burden, and the doctrines of that church heretical?"

"Oh, I understand you," she said, after a moment's thought; "you would ask of what religion I am, and laugh a little at both, to put your question in a form not uncivil to either. But if you needs must know, I will tell you thus much—I was born a Protestant."

"Born a Protestant!" Algernon Grey exclaimed; "that seems to me a new way of becoming one."

"Nay, I don't know," she answered; "I believe it is the way one-half the world receive their religion, whatever it may be."

"Right," he said, "right! You are right, and I was wrong—not only their religion, but half their views. You were born a Protestant, and so was I; but I must say, happy are those whose reason, when it becomes mature, confirms the principles they have received in their youth. So it has been with me; and, I trust, with you also."

"Nay, I do not know that my reason is mature," replied the lady, with a smile; "but everything I have thought and read leads me to think that I cannot be wrong. It seems to me that the religion, which was taught to fishermen by its Divine author, to be preached to all the world, may be well read, and studied unadorned, by the descendants of the world that then existed: it seems to me, that if priests married they were as likely to be as good priests and better men: it seems to me, that when our religion teaches to confess our faults one to another, there was no thought of setting apart a particular order of men to be the registrars of all our wickedness, but rather to correct that stubborn pride which hardens us in evil, by inducing us to deny our guilt. Moreover, I think that the habit of bowing down before pieces of stone and wood, of praying to images like ourselves when they are dead, and of kissing solemnly a piece of ivory on a cross, is something very like idolatry. But I know little of these things. I read the Bible, and am convinced myself; and yet I cannot make up

my mind to think that good men, with faith in a Saviour, will perish eternally because they Judge differently. Now you have won from me an account of my faith; but pray do not tell any one; for half of our clergy would think I was part papish, and the other half part fool."

"You have thought of these things deeply, at all events," replied Algernon Grey, "and that is something, where so few think at all."

"Oh, one cannot help thinking of these things here, where one hears little else from morning till night; but I have thought of them, too, for other reasons," she said more gravely.

"One has need of consolations in this world, at times. There is but one true source from which they flow; and before we drink at that source, it is needful to ascertain if the stream be pure. Still we are very grave," she continued: "Heaven help us! if they did but know in your gay saloons of what we two here are talking in the gardens, they would open their eyes with wonder, and perhaps their lips with laughter."

"Well, then, we will change our tone," continued Algernon Grey; "come, let us range along those higher terraces, where I see a long line of arches, tall, and slim, and one beyond another, like the fragment of a Roman aqueduct striding across the valley."

"Gladly," she answered; "the air will be cooler there, for it is higher; and we shall have it all to ourselves; for the gay world of the court will linger down here till the trumpets sound to supper. I love the high free air and solitude. One draws a finer breath upon the mountains, and I often wish I were an eagle to soar above their jagged tops and drink the breath of heaven itself. But here comes your gay companion, and the fair lady of Lausitz."

"Who may she be?" inquired the young Englishman.

"A very pretty lady, somewhat gay," replied his companion; "but you must forgive me, my good captive, if I tell you nought of the ladies of this court. In truth, I know very little; for I hear much that I do not believe, much that I cannot be sure of; and though I see sometimes what I would not see, yet I would fain judge all charitably, and put no harsh construction on other people's acts."

As she spoke Lovet and the fair countess passed at some little distance; and certainly, to all appearance, he had made some progress to intimacy in a marvellous short space of time. She might be fatigued, it is true—it might be but an idle habit she had gained; but still, the arm that was passed through his lot the fair hand drop till it met her left hand, which she had raised, and the round but taper fingers of either were intertwined together. The head, slightly inclined over the left shoulder, drooped somewhat forward, as if the eyes were cast upon the ground, while the ear was raised to catch his words. There was a languor in her figure and in her air, an ill-assured step, a certain feebleness, as if some powers of mind or body were failing. It was his voice spoke as they passed. "Nay, nonsense," he said; "these are all idle notions; bugbears set up to make the grown children of the world good boys. Come, fair one, come; do not assume a pettish anger that you do not feel. Love

was made for such a heart as yours, and such an hour for love," and, bending down his head, he added somewhat more.

"How dare you," said the lady in a low voice, "on my life, you are too bold: I will leave you, I will, indeed."

But she did not leave him; and, for more than an hour afterwards, they might be seen wandering about those gardens, arm in arm, affecting solitary places.

It is strange how often good and evil take nearly the same forms—how that which is bright and pure seeks the same scenes with all that is most opposite, but finds a different treasure there; as the bee will draw honey from the aconite, whence others will extract the deadly poison. In the bland innocence of her heart, the bright being by Algernon Grey's side led him on to the most lonely parts of the garden, wandered with him where there was no eye to watch them; and mounting one high flight of steps after another, passed along the whole extent of that grand terrace, raised upon its stupendous arches, the encumbered remains of which may still be seen overhanging the valley of the Neckar. But there, at the verge, they paused, gazing forth on the moonlight scene around; marking the manifold gradations of the shadow and the light, as mass after mass of wood and castle, mountain and rock, city and plain, faded off into one gentle hue of grey mingled with gold. A thousand were the images called up in the minds of each, by the objects that their eyes beheld; a thousand were the associations and the allusions to which they gave birth. Wide and erratic as is ever the course of fancy, soaring into the heights of the highest heaven, and plunging into the deepest depths below, never, perhaps, had her wing seemed more untiring, more wild and eccentric, than with those two young hearts on that eventful night—eventful in every way to themselves, to those around them, to Europe, to the world, to the march of society, to the enlightenment of the human mind, to the eternal destinies of all man's race.

To what fundamental changes in everything that affects man's best interests, did not that nineteenth of August give rise!

The destiny that hung above them, without their knowing it, seemed to have some mysterious influence upon the minds and characters of both. The barrier of cold formality was broken down between them; each poured forth the thoughts of the bosom as to an old familiar friend. Agnes felt herself irresistibly impelled—carried away, she knew not how or why—to speak to her companion as she had never spoken to man before. She fancied it was, that she had, for the first time, found a spirit congenial to her own; and certain it is, that there is a magic in the first touch of sympathy, which awakens sleeping powers in the heart, develops undiscovered stores of thought and feeling, and brings to light the bright things of the soul. But surely there was something more in it than this. Upon that hour, upon that moment hung the destinies of each; though neither had one thought that such could be the case, though of all things it seemed the most improbable, though he was a wandering stranger, purposing but to stop a few days in the

place; and she seemed fixed down to it and its associations for life. Yet so it was; and had aught been different between them; had she remained in the mere timidity of the young girl, or in the cold courtesy of new acquaintance; had he maintained the usual proud and lofty air which he assumed in general with women, how different would have been their fate through life! The varied scenes through which they were to pass, the distant lands which they were destined to visit, would never have beheld them together; and that night would have been but a pleasant dream, to be recollected amidst the dull realities of life.

It was otherwise, however. She was so young, so gentle, so bright, so beautiful, that her society acted as a charm, waking him from a sort of dull and heavy torpor which had been cast over his heart by an event that had taken place in his boyhood—a counter-spell, which dissipated one that had chained up the current of his youthful blood in cold and icy bonds. He gave way to all he felt, to all the pleasure of the moment. Their conversation freed itself from all ceremonious shackles; both seemed to feel that they could trust fully in each other, and spoke, as feeling dictated, with no reserve and no misunderstanding. The flight of thought became gayer, too, naturally and easily; and as Agnes gave way to the high and buoyant spirit of youth, her young fancies soared and twinkled, like the wings of a lark in the sunshine; while Algernon Grey, with a firmer and more steady flight, seemed like a spirit beside her spirit, guiding her on, higher and higher, into the world of space open to the human mind.

Suddenly, as they thus rambled on together, through the remote parts of the gardens, they heard the sounds of distant trumpets, blowing clear and loud; and Agnes, with a start, turned to her companion, saying: "That is the call to supper. Our evening is coming to an end; do not think me too strange and free, if I say that I am sorry for it."

"Nay," answered he, "why should I think you so, when I, with far more cause, feel the same most deeply. We may, perhaps, never meet again, fair lady; but I shall always remember this night as one undimmed in its brightness, without a spot to chequer it, without a shade, or a regret. I do think you free and at ease; more so, perhaps, than I expected; more so than many would have been, older in the world's ways than yourself—but not too free; and I can well conceive that the long sojourn in a court like this has removed all cold restraint from your manner."

"Oh, no," she said, "it is not that! I never mingle with the court when I can help it. The ease I have shown to-night has depended, partly on myself, partly on you."

"Let me hear more," he answered; "I do not clearly understand you."

"Well, then," she said, "I am habitually free and at ease; because I am sure of myself—because I feel that I never mean wrong; and do not know that I have any thoughts I could wish to conceal. Let those who doubt themselves fear to show their heart as it is; thank the wise friends and careful guidance, mine has no part that may not be open. Then, as"

your share: you have treated me in a manner different from that which most men would assume to most women. I could scarcely lay my finger upon one of all that court, who, sent with me, like you, throughout this night, would not have tried to please my ear with tales of love and praises of my beauty, long, stupid, and insignificant as a cricket on the hearth. Had you done so, my manner might have been very different."

Her companion did not reply for a moment or two; but then said, with a smile: "It seems to me that there must be something both vain and insulting in supposing that a woman will willingly listen to tales of love from a man who has known her but a few hours—he must think her very light and himself very captivating."

"We poor women," she answered, "are bound to gratitude towards your sex, even for forbearance; and therefore it is I thank you for not having held me so lightly."

"I am far more than repaid," he rejoined, as she guided him down the steps into the lower garden, saying that they must hasten on, and that was the shortest way.

Passing round under the high banks formed by the casting down of a great part of the hill, called the Friesenberg, they had crossed one half of the gardens, and were walking on at a spot where the shadow of one of the great towers fell deep upon the green turf, when suddenly a tall figure seemed to rise out of the earth close beside them, passed them, and disappeared. For an instant the lady clung to her companion's arm as if in terror; but then, the moment after, she laughed gaily, saying: "This place has so many superstitious legends attached to it that they cling to one's fancy whether one will or not. If I ever see you again, I will tell you one about this very spot; but we have not time now; for in ten minutes after that trumpet-sound the Elector will be at table."

We will not go on to visit the banquet that followed, to contemplate its splendour, or criticise the ceremonies there observed. It were an easy matter to describe it, for we have many a dull relation of many a gay feast of the time; but, in this work, I have not in view to paint the mere customs and manners of the age, except incidentally, but rather to show man's heart and feelings undisguised, and exhibit their true proportions, stripped of a gaudy but disguising robe of ceremony.

CHAPTER IV.

How often an aching head or an aching heart is the follower of a gay night like that of the nineteenth of August, those who have much mingled with, or much watched, the world well know. In the commerce of life we are too apt to reverse the usual course of all reasonable traffic, and purchase with short present pleasure a vast amount of future grief and care. The bargain is a bad one, but made every day; even at the table, in the ball-room, and in any another scene, this same losing trade is going on, with the bitter day of reckoning on morrow.

It is with Algernon Grey, as he sits

there in the large gloomy chamber, with his head leaning on his hand, his eyes gazing vacantly forth through the narrow window! The servants come and go; and he notices them not. The table is laid for breakfast, but the meal remains untasted. Busy sounds rise up from without and float through the half-open casement; the gay and cheering laugh, the light song, the chattered conversation, the cry of the vender of early grapes, the grating noise of wheels, or that of horses' feet, and through the whole a lively hum, indistinct but merry to the ear. Nevertheless, he hears not a sound, buried in the deep thoughts of his own heart.

Is it that the brow is aching! or that languor and feverish heat reign in those strong and graceful limbs! Oh, no. The whole frame is free from pain; fresh, vigorous, and fit for instant action. Is there any word, spoken the night before, any deed done, that he would recall, yet cannot? Not so. He has nought to reproach himself with; conscience has no accusing voice.

What is it then? He communes with his own heart; and a dark overshadowing cloud comes between him and the sun of happiness. It is a shadow from the past; but it extends over all the present, and far and vague into the future.

The first thing that roused him, was the entrance of his gay friend, William Lovet, who came to share the meal with him. Nevertheless, Algernon did not perceive his approach, till he was close to him, and laid his hand upon his shoulder, saying:—

"Heaven and earth, Algernon! what has made thee so moody, man? There must be something in the air of this foul city, that—with such a bright vision as that of last night to gladden your way—one stain of care should be found upon your brow."

His friend roused himself instantly, and answered gaily, though not without an effort: "I must think sometimes, William; it is a part of my nature. One little drop of thought fell into my clay when it was kneading. Thank your stars that none such entered into your composition. But let us to breakfast, my appetite tells me that the hour has somewhat passed."

"Appetite," cried Lovet, taking his seat; "tell not the bright-eyed Agnes of your having so coarse and vulgar a thing. She will think your love forsworn and all your fidelity false and fickle, if you do more than eat one slice out of that partridge breast, or drink aught but sour Rhenish throughout the day. But seriously, and upon my life, with solemn earnestness, I do declare, never was such a glorious chance as has fallen to the lot of each of us. Had we culled the whole court. I fancy, we could have found nought more charming; and we must stay here at least a month, to profit by Dame Fortune's favours."

"A very sweet companion I had," answered Algernon Grey, coldly; "but no vows did I make, no fidelity did I swear, my good friend."

"Heaven and earth!" cried Lovet, "did one ever hear of such a thing as a man travelling with another upon equal terms, and yet leaving him all the hard work to do! Swear! why I swore till my joints ached and my teeth were sadly damaged; and as to vows, two Dutch

barks, broad in the bow, broad in the stern, and deep enough in the hold to hide ten Dutchmen upon an elephant, would not hold one half of the cargo that I landed safely at yon lady's feet last night. Let me see, what is her name? I have it somewhere, written from her own sweet lips—Countess of Lausitz!—Matilda, too, by the mark! A good name, a marvellous good name, is not, Algernon? Musical, pretty, soft, soothing, lovable. But never go anywhere without tablets! See what service mine have been to me! Many a fair prospect is spoiled by a mistake in the name. Call Matilda Joan, or Louisa Deborah, and you are ruined forever!—Matilda, Countess of Lausitz! Charming! Sweet! Bless her soft eyes and her sweet lips; they are worth the best diamond in the Mogul's turban. And so you positively did not swear fidelity, nor vow vows? The lady must have thought you marvellously stupid."

While he had been speaking he had not failed to do justice to the good things on the table. Nor had Algernon Grey shown any lack of appetite, applying himself more stoutly to eat his breakfast than to answer his companion's light raillery. At length, however, he replied: "She did not seem to think so; or, perhaps, she was too courteous to express it; but, at all events, my evening spent with her was a very pleasant one, though neither love, nor vows, nor sighing, had any share therein."

"And yet, methinks, you went into very sighing places," answered Lovet, laughing; "you affected the groves and solitary terraces, as well as others, whom you wot of; and then linked arm in arm, with eyes cast down and sweet low voices, if something warmer than a prologue to a mystery, or a descant on the moon, did not enter into your gentle communion, methinks you must have been worse than Hecla; for, though it be all ice, they say, yet there is fire at the heart; and that girl's eyes and lips were enough to set any one's blood in a flame, even if it were naturally cold as a toad's. Come, come, Algernon, no such reserve between us; let us speak freely of our loves, and we may help each other."

"On my life! William, I have none to speak of," answered his companion, warmly. "You may make love to whom you like, for you are free; but with me it is very different."

"Nonsense," exclaimed the other; "the circumstances are the same in both cases, only the position is reversed. If I am free, she is married; did you not see her husband there! a fat, white-faced man, not so high as a musketoon. But what is that to me! The love of a month does not trouble itself about matrimony; and my great grandmother's starched ruff is, of all things, the emblem that I hate; for she dared not even kiss her daughter for fear of its crumpling. Why should you heed, either? A little pardonable polygamy is an excellent good receipt for keeping the taste fresh by constant variety. Heaven help me! if all my wives were counsellors throughout the cities of civilized Europe, I fear I should have to transfer me to Turk's, and lodge next door to the Sublime Porte."

Algernon Grey smiled, whether he would or not, at his friend's account of himself, but still

he answered seriously: "The case is this, William; whatever I may judge I have a right to do myself; there is one thing, I am sure, I have no right to do, which is, to make a young, gay, happy heart unhappy, sad, and old—ay, I say old; for the touch of disappointed love is as withering as the hand of Time. No, no, I have no right to do that!"

"Good faith! you are most scrupulously wrong, my noble cousin," answered Lovet, "and do injustice both to yourself and others. Man, and woman too, were born for pleasure; changing, varying, at each step we take. It is a sort of duty in my eyes to give every human being brought in contact with me whatever joy I can afford them; and I should as much think of refusing a poor fellow a good dinner, for fear he should not have one to-morrow, as fail to make love to a pretty lady who expects it; because I cannot go on loving her all my life. Every woman has a pleasure in being made love to, and I say, Out upon the niggard who will not give her a share of it when he has the opportunity. Every man to his own whim, however; for, after all, these are nought but whims, or the effects of a most pragmatical education. But follow your own course, follow your own course, and go on picking the bare bone of a very musty morality, fancying it all the while venison and capon. Perhaps, after all, you are nought but a true and devoted knight and lover; and the thought of the rare beauty you left four or five years ago in England, like a certain composition of salt and nitre in a pickling-pan, may be preserving you, uncorrupted as a neat's tongue, sound and safe, but somewhat hard and shrivelled withal. Well, she is a glorious creature, it must be confessed; and I, being your cousin and hers too, may venture to confess, without suspicion of flattery, that rarely have I seen beauty equal to hers. The bud has burst into the rose since you left it, and though there may be a thorn or two, the flower is well worth gathering."

Algernon Grey mused and answered in a thoughtful tone, as if arguing with himself. "Taste is a strange thing," he said, "marvellously strange! Who can give reason for his likings and dislikings! and yet there must be some course of reasoning below them all. Or is it instinct, William, that teaches us instantly to appreciate and seek that which is suitable to ourselves? There are several kinds of beauty—"

"True, noble cousin," answered Lovet, in a bantering tone.

"Ay, but two very distinct classes into which all minor differences perhaps may be arranged," his friend continued.

"Perhaps so," rejoined the other; "let us hear more of the two ranks."

"Why there is first," replied Algernon Grey, "that sort of beauty which dazzles and surprises—brilliant and commanding. I think men call it—the bold firm eye, the Juno frown, the look of fiery passion, sparkling as a diamond but as hard, bright as a sword but oftentimes as ready to wound. With me it alarms rather than attracts, rouses to resistance instead of subduing."

"Go on," said Lovet, in a quiet but meddling tone, "I understand."

"Then there is the other sort," his friend continued, "that which wins rather than triumphs; the gentle, the gay, more than the keen and bright; yielding to, rather than demanding love; the trusting, the confiding look, instead of the ruling and commanding; the lip where smiles seem to find their native home; the soft half-shaded eye full of veiled light, speaking at times the sportiveness of innocent thought, under which may lie, concealed against the time of need, higher and stronger powers of heart and mind."

Lovet had become graver as his companion went on; and when he ended, replied with some warmth, "Ay, indeed, such beauty as that might well win love for life, and he would be a fool who found it and let any idle obstacle prevent his purchase of so rare a Jewel; but it is a dream of your fancy, Algernon. Imagination has laid on those delicate colours, and you will never see the original of the portrait. Each man has in his own heart his own image of perfection, always sought for, but rarely found. If once he meets it, let him beware how it escapes him. He will never see its like again. I am no enthusiast, as you well know—I have seen too much of life; but here—all levity as you think me—did I find once the creature that fancy early drew as the companion of my days, and had hope of winning her love, I tell you, Algernon, there is not that consideration on the earth I would not cast behind me for the great joy of making her mine for ever: no, not one—rank, station, wealth, the world's esteem, all cold and formal dogmas, devised by knaves and listened to by fools. I would bend all to that. My own habitual lightness, the sneer and jest of gay companions, the censure of the grave, and reverend, the fear of outcry and invective, and all the idle babble of the world, would weigh but as a feather in the balance against the lifelong dream of happiness which such an union would call up."

When he had spoken—and he did so with fire and eagerness altogether unlike himself—he leaned his head upon his hand, and fell apparently into profound thought for several minutes. Algernon Grey, too, mused, and his meditation lasted longer than his companion's, for he was still in a deep reverie when Lovet started up, exclaiming, "But it is all in vain! Come, Algernon, let us not think—it is the most irrational waste of time that can be devised. We are but Fate's monkeys. She keeps us here in this cage of earth, and throws us what crumbs she will. Happy is he who catches them quickest. What are you for to-day? I am for the castle to worship at my little shrine, unless I hear from my saint to the contrary before the clock strikes eleven."

"Some time in the day I must go up, too," replied his friend; "in courtesy we must both do so, to show our thankfulness for our kind reception; but before I go, I must away into the town to seek out worthy Dr. Henry Altling, this renowned professor, to whom my uncle, his old friend, sent me a letter by your hands."

"Then, you may as well publish your name at the market-cross, if there be one," answered Lovet; "it will be given out from the chair of

philosophy this morning, and over the whole town ere noon."

"No, no," replied the other, with a smile; "my uncle humours my whim—he is Astrea-struck, and loves all wild exploits. In his letter, I am but called his young kinsman, Master Algernon Grey, and the good doctor will be ignorant of all the rest."

"Well, well, I care not," answered Lovet; "it is no affair of mine. I transformed myself into William Lovet to please you, and though, certainly, the plan has its conveniences for every one but the staid and most line-and-rule gentleman who devised it, yet I am ready to appear in my own feathers to-morrow, should need be."

"Perhaps, thinking you will appear to more advantage, Will," replied Algernon Grey, with an effort to be gay; "however, there is no fear. Our borrowed plumage will last as long as we may want it, if we take care not to soil our own feathers underneath."

"Now, *corpo di Baccho!*" cried Lovet, "I admire you again. That last morality in metaphor was worthy of a saint in orange-tawny velvet, or my fair cousin, Algernon. I have hopes of you whenever you begin to deal in tropes and figures. At least, you are not dull then, which is something. That glorious *trist*, wit, wisdom, and wantonness, can then claim some share in you, and there is a chance of the man who has thrown away his youth and his youth's powers in cold asceticism, trying to warm his age with the fire of profligacy. It is a common case, and will be yours, Algernon; for the man who commits not youthful follies, is sure in the end to take up with reverend vices. But do you agree to my plan; a month here—but one poor month; and if I win not my fair lady in that time, I shall be right ready to slink away like a cur that has been kicked out for attempting to steal a marrow-bone. You can attend lectures in the mean time, and learn, from the skull-cap of old bald-headed Scultetus, to carry yourself evenly on slippery places."

"Well, stay what time you like," replied Algernon Grey. "If I find cause, I can go on a stage or two and wait for you. At present, I will forth to find out this renowned professor. Should you be gone ere my return, leave tidings of your doings for my guidance."

Thus saying, he left him, and as he went, William Lovet gazed after him till the door was shut. Then a somewhat bitter smile curled his lip, and, after a moment's thought, he muttered, "Limed! limed! or I am much mistaken. Ay, ay, I know the sort of beauty that you have so tenderly described. A month! Stay but a month, and if I judge her right, and know man's heart, you are plucked in beyond recall."

CHAPTER. V.

PRECEDED by a Knecht, as he was called, of the inn, in a close-fitting jacket, wide brown breeches, and blue stockings, Algernon Grey walked through the narrow and tortuous streets of Heidelberg towards the residence of a man

then renowned for his wit and wisdom, though we know not at the present day upon what this fame was founded. Although it was the custom in those times for gay gallants to ruffle through the streets with a long train of servants, badged, liveried, and armed, no one accompanied the young Englishman, except the man to show him the way. At that hour of the morning—it was now near eleven—few persons were to be seen abroad; for the student was busy at his book, the shopkeeper laboring in his vocation. Those who did appear were all in their particular costume, distinctive of class and station. You could have laid your finger upon any man in the whole town, and named at once his occupation from his dress. Nor was this custom, which assigned peculiar garments to each peculiar class, without many great advantages, besides the mere picturesque effect. But it is in vain to regret that these things have passed away; they were parts of the spirit of that age, an age and of distinctions; and now in the fusion of all classes which has taken place, where no distinctions are suffered to remain but that of wealth, the keeping up of peculiar costumes would be an idle shadow of a thing no longer existing.

Amidst close rows of tall houses—the narrow windows of which displayed no costly wares—and, here and there, through the rows of booths erected before the doors, in which the tradesmen were then accustomed to display their goods for sale, Algernon Grey walked on for about five minutes, from time to time asking a question of his guide, who never replied without humbly doffing his little cap, and adding, "Honourable Sir," or "Noble gentleman," to every sentence. It was another trait of the times and the country.

At length the man stopped at the open door of a tall, dull-looking house, and informed his companion that he would find Dr. Alting on the second floor; and mounting the long, cold, broad steps of stone, Algernon Grey found his way up to the rooms of him he sought. A fresh, sturdy, starched servant wench, who instantly caught his foreign accent, and thereupon made up her mind not to understand a word he said, was at length brought to introduce him to the presence of her master; and, following her along a narrow passage, the young Englishman was ushered into a room, such as the general appearance of the house had given little reason to expect. It was wide, handsome, overhung by a fine carved oak ceiling, and furnished all round with large book-cases, richly carved, containing the treasured collection of a long life in every shape and form, from the enormous folio to the most minute duodecimo.

At a heavy oaken table, near one of the windows, sat two gentlemen, of different age and appearance. One was a man with white hair and beard, whose sixtieth summer would never come again. He was dressed in a long loose gown of some black stuff; and, on his head, which probably was bald, he wore a small crushed velvet cap. His face was fine and intelligent; and from beneath the thick overhanging eyebrow shone out a clear and sparkling eye.

The other was habited in a coat of buff leather, not very new, but laced with gold. His cloak was a plain, brown broad-cloth, a good deal fresher than his coat; and on his legs he wore a pair of those large funnel-shaped boots, which seemed intended to catch all the rain or dust that might fall or fly. His heavy rapier lay along his thigh; but beyond this he was unarmed; and his hat with its single feather rested beside him. In age he might be about fifty. His strong black hair and pointed beard were somewhat grizzled; but there was no sign of decay in form or feature. His teeth were fine and beautifully white; his face rough with exposure, but not wrinkled; his frame was strong, tall, and powerful; and the bold contour of the swelling muscles could be seen through the tight sleeve of his coat. His face was a very pleasant one, grave but not stern, thoughtful but not sad; and, as he turned sharply round in his chair at the opening of the door, a faint recollection of his features, as if he had seen them before, or some very like them, came across the young Englishman's mind.

With his usual calm self-possession, Algernon Grey advanced straight towards the seat of the gentleman in black, and, with a few words of introduction, presented a letter. Dr. Alting rose to receive him, and, for a single instant, fixed his keen grey eyes upon his visitor's face with a look the most intent and searching. The glance was withdrawn almost as soon as given; and then, courteously putting forward a seat, he opened the letter and read. The moment after, he took Algernon's hand and shook it heartily, exclaiming, "So, sir, you are a kinsman of this good lord, my old and much respected friend. Ever to see him again is beyond my hopes; but it is something to have before me one of his race. What, if I may ask, brings you to Heidelberg? If you come in search of learning, here you can find it amongst my reverend brethren of the University. If in search of gaiety and pleasure, surely, above there, in the castle, you will have your heart's content; for a more merry body of light young hearts were seldom ever collected—good faith," he continued, turning to the gentleman who had been sitting with him when Algernon entered, "they kept their revel up full long last night. As I sat here at my studies—it must have been past midnight—the music came down upon me in gusts, almost making even my old sober limb-tingle to go and join the merry dance, as I did in boyhood. It must have been a splendid scene."

"This gentleman was there," replied the other; "I saw him for an instant; but I stayed not long; for that music has another effect on me, my good old friend; and I betook me to my tower again, more in the spirit of the gloomy anchorite than yourself, it seems."

"I passed the night there and part of the morning too, I fear," said Algernon Grey; "for it was two before we reached our inn."

"I trust you had a happy night of it, then," answered Dr. Alting; "such scenes are the property of youth; and it would be hard to deny to the young heart all the brief pleasures of which life has so few."

"A far happier night," answered Algernon.

Grey, "than many of those have been which I have spent in more powerful courts and scenes as gay. There happened to me that which, in the chances of the world, rarely occurs, to have a companion for the night whose thoughts and feelings were wholly congenial to my own; a lady whose beauty, dazzling as it is, would have fallen upon my cold heart only like a ray of wintry sunshine on a frozen world, had it not been that, unlike every one I ever saw, a high pure spirit and a rich bright fancy left her beauty itself forgotten in their own transcendent lustre."

"You are an enthusiast, my young friend," said Dr. Alting, while the stranger fixed his eyes on Algernon Grey, with a gay smile; "what might be the name of this paragon?"

"The princess called her Agnes," answered the young Englishman; "and more I did not enquire."

A merry glance passed between the good professor and his companion; and the latter exclaimed, "You did not enquire! That seems strange, when you were so captivated."

"There is the mistake," said Algernon Grey, laughing; "I was not captivated; I admired, esteemed, approved, but that is all. Most likely she and I will never meet again; for I shall wander for a year, and then return to duties in my own land; and the name of Agnes is all I want, by which to remember a happy night of the very few I have ever known, and a being full of grace and goodness, whom I shall see no more."

"A strange philosophy," cried Dr. Alting; "especially for so young a man."

"And so you wander for a year," said the stranger; "if it be not a rash question, as it seems you are not seeking adventures in love, is it high deeds of arms you are in search of, like the ancient knights?"

"Not so, either," answered Algernon Grey; "although I am willing enough, should the occasion present itself, to serve under any honourable flag, where my religion is not an obstacle, as I have done more than once before."

"Ah!" said Dr. Alting, "then you are one of those—those very few, who will suffer their religion to be an obstacle to any of their plans."

"Assuredly," answered Algernon Grey. "The strife at present throughout the whole of Europe is, and must be ever more or less for the maintenance of the pure and unperverted religion of the Gospel against the barbarous superstitions and corruptions of the Romish church; and, whatever may be the pretext of war, whoever draws the sword in a papist army—"

"Is fighting for the Woman of Babylon," cried Dr. Alting, eagerly; "is setting himself up against the Cross of Christ, is advancing the banner of the Dragon, destined sooner or later to be thrown into the pit of the nethermost hell;" and, taking the young Englishman's hand, he shook it heartily, exclaiming: "I am glad to hear such sentiments from the kinsman of my noble friend."

"He entertains them as firmly as yourself, you well know," answered Algernon Grey; "they are common to all his family; and, for my part, humble as I am, I shall always be

ready to draw the sword in the defence of right, whenever the opportunity is afforded me."

"It is coming, my dear sir, the time is coming," cried the old man. "Great events are before us; and I see for the first time the prospect of the true faith becoming predominant in this land of Germany; thence, I trust, to spread its holy and beneficial influence throughout the world. You have heard, doubtless you have heard, that in the very heart of this great empire, the people of Bohemia have raised the standard of freedom of conscience. Even now they are in deliberation to choose them a new king, in place of the papist tyrant, who has violated all the solemn pledges, by virtue of which alone he held the crown. If their choice be a wise and good one, if it be such as I believe it will be, if the head of the Protestant Union,—in a word—if the Elector Palatine be chosen King of Bohemia, doubtless the spirit of the true faith will, from that moment, go forth with irresistible might, and shake the idolatrous church of the seven hills to its foundation. I look to it with confidence and trust: I look to every gallant spirit and faithful heart to come forward and take his share in the good work; and, with the name of the Lord on our side, there is no fear of the result."

The conversation proceeded for some time in the same strain. With eager fire, and with sometimes a not very reverend application of the words of Scripture, Dr. Alting went on to advance his own opinions, becoming more eager every moment, especially when the probability of the Elector Palatine being chosen as their king by the states of Bohemia was referred to.

The gentleman who was with him when Algernon Grey entered, took little part in the discussion, remaining grave and somewhat stern in look; though, from the few words he uttered, it was evident that his religious views were the same as those of his two companions. He smiled, indeed, in turn at the different sorts of enthusiasm of the old man and the young one; and once Dr. Alting shook his finger at him good-humouredly, saying: "Ah! Herbert, you would have men believe you cold and stoical, and, for that purpose, in every affair of life you act like no other man; but I know the fire that is under it all."

"Fire enough, when it is needed," answered Herbert; "but only when it is needed, my good friend. If troops spend all their powder in firing salutes, they will have none to charge their cannon with in the day of battle; but as you are not expected to put on the cuirass, it is just as well that you should keep up men's spirits, and fix their determinations by your oratory. Only let me be quiet. You won't find me wanting when the time comes."

"I trust none will be wanting," said Algernon Grey; "but yet I cannot help feeling, that in this light-minded world, many whom we count upon rashly, may fall from us readily."

"Too true, too true," said Herbert, shaking his head.

"I will not believe it," cried Dr. Alting; "with such a prince, and such a cause, and such an object, every man, who has a particle of truth in his nature, will do his duty, I am sure; and let the false go—we can do without them."

"You must add the weak, too, my reverend

friend," said Algernon Grey, rising to depart; "but still, I do think, and I do trust, that there are enough both firm and true in Europe, to accomplish this great task, unless some sad accident occur, or some great mistake be committed. We shall see, however; and in the mean time, farewell."

Dr. Alting shook hands with him warmly, asked where he could find him, how long would be his stay in Heidelberg, and all those other questions which courtesy dictated: but perhaps the reverend doctor felt, in a degree not altogether pleasant, that his young friend, if not so learned a man as himself in books and parchments, had another sort of learning—that of the world—which he himself did not possess.

The gentleman who had been called Herbert seemed to feel differently; and, when the young gentleman was about to depart, he rose, saying: "I will go with you, and perhaps may show you some things of interest." Then bidding adieu to Dr. Alting, he followed Algernon Grey out of the room, and descended the stairs with him in silence. Under the shadow of the doorway they found waiting the Knecht, who had guided the young gentleman thither; but Herbert dismissed him, saying to his companion: "I will be your guide back. Shall we stroll along to the church, or visit some of the fortifications? Both are somewhat in your way, it would seem."

"Nay," answered Algernon, "with the church I have little to do, except when my opinions are drawn forth by such a man as our learned friend; but I will go whithersoever you choose to lead me."

"Well, then, we will stroll along and take things as they come," answered Herbert; "we can scarcely go amiss in this town and neighbourhood, for each step has its own particular interest, or its own beauty. It is a place I never weary of."

As he spoke they turned into one of the narrow streets that led up towards the hills, and were crossing the castle-road, in order to take a path through the woods, when Algernon Grey's quick ear caught the sound of a voice calling to him. Looking round, he saw a gentleman coming down with a hasty step, followed by two or three servants, and instantly recognised the Baron of Oberntraut. A feeling—I might almost call it a presentiment: one of those strange, inexplicable foresights of a coming event, which sometimes put us on our guard against approaching evil, made him say to his companion: "Oh! this is the gentleman with whom I had a bet last night, I will rejoin you in a moment;" and he advanced a step or two up the hill.

The next instant Oberntraut was by his side. "I wish to speak a moment with you, sir," he said.

Algernon Grey bowed his head and was silent.

"We had a bet last night," continued the baron, with a flushed but somewhat embarrassed air; "my servants are carrying down the amount to your inn."

"Thanks," answered Algernon Grey; "they will find some of my people there, to whom they can deliver it."

"I always pay my debts, sir," said Obern-

traut; "but I rather think there is another account to be settled between us."

"Indeed!" replied Algernon Grey, calmly; "I am not aware of it. What may it be?"

"Oh! sir, you assume ignorance!" rejoined the other, in an insulting tone: "in a word, then, we do not suffer foreign gentlemen to come hither, win our money, and court our ladies, without making them pass through some ordeal. Do you understand me now?"

"Perfectly," answered the young Englishman, with a slight smile; "such words are not to be mistaken; and let me assure you, as I wish to see everybody pleased, I will not disappoint you; but, at the same time, we may conduct a matter of this sort without warmth, and with all courtesy. I know not how I have aggrieved you; but that I ask not: it is quite sufficient that you think yourself aggrieved, and I will give you such opportunity of redressing yourself as you may wish for."

"I thank you, sir," replied the other, in a more moderate tone; "when and where shall it be?"

"Nay, that I must leave to you," answered the young Englishman; "I will make but two conditions—that it be speedy, and that we embroil no others in our quarrel. I have but one friend here, and as he has been somewhat too famous in our own country for rencontres of this kind, I would fain spare him any share in an affair of mine."

"Be that as you like," replied the baron; "on all accounts we shall be better alone: the place must be one where we shall have no interruption. Let me think! Yes, that will do. Will you meet me to-morrow on the bridge, each with a single page whom we can leave behind at our convenience? I will lead you to a spot secure and shaded from all eyes, where we shall have good turf and space enough."

"Agreed," answered Algernon Grey, "but why not this very day? I am quite prepared."

"But I have a few hours' journey to take first," replied the baron; "no, in your courtesy let it be to-morrow; and the safest hour will be just before nightfall. Come a little earlier to the bridge, for we have some small distance to go—with our swords alone—is it not so?"

"As you will," said his companion. "Be it so then—in the grey I will not fail you—good morning, sir;" and turning round, he rejoined his new acquaintance Herbert, with an easy and unembarrassed air.

Herbert was not entirely deceived, however. He had been standing where the young Englishman left him at about five paces' distance, where the greater part of their conversation was inaudible; but he knew one of the parties and his character well, and divined the other rightly. The last words of Algernon Grey, too, which, detached from the rest, had seemed to the speaker insignificant, had been uttered in a louder tone, and Herbert had heard him say distinctly, "In the grey I will not fail you—good morning, sir." The expressions were nothing in themselves; they might refer to any trifling and accidental arrangement; but Herbert's eyes had been fixed upon the face of Oberntraut, who stood fronting him, and he read the look that it wore, if not with certainty, assuredly not wrongly.

As the two separated the baron doffed his hat and plume to Herbert with every sign of high respect; and the other returned the salutation, though but coldly. For a moment or two, as Algernon and his companion walked up the hill, nothing was said; and then the younger gentleman began to speak lightly of indifferent subjects, thinking that longer silence might lead to suspicions. Herbert answered not, but went on musing, till at length—as if he had paid not the slightest attention to the words which had been falling on his ear for the last two or three minutes—he broke forth at once with a dry laugh, saying: “So, you have contrived to manufacture a quarrel already.”

“Nay, not so!” answered Algernon Grey; “if you mean with the Baron of Obertraut, let me assure you there is no quarrel of any kind between us. I know of no offence that I have given him, and for my own part I may safely say that I have received none. There was a bet between us which I won, and he seems perhaps a little nettled; but what is that to me?”

Herbert looked down thoughtfully, still walking on, and after a while he paused, asking as abruptly as before,—“Have you many friends in this place?”

“Nay, I have been here but eighteen hours,” answered the other; “happy is the man who can boast of many friends, take the whole world over and pick them from the four quarters of the globe. I have none who deserves the name within these walls, but the one who came with me.”

“Well,” replied the other, “should you require one, on occasion of import, you know where to find one who has seen some hard blows given in his day.”

“I thank you much, and understand you rightly,” said Algernon Grey; “should I have need of such help, depend upon it, I will apply to you and none other. But at present, believe me, I have none.”

“What! not ‘in the grey?’” asked Herbert, with a laugh; and then, whistling two or three bars of an English air, he added, “Will you spend an hour or two with an old soldier to-night, my young friend?”

“Willingly,” replied Algernon Grey, smiling at the suspicions in which he clearly saw the invitation was given. “When shall I come? My time is quite free.”

“Oh! come an hour before twilight,” answered Herbert, “and stay till the castle clock strikes ten—Will that suit you?”

“Right well,” said the young Englishman. “I will not fail by a moment, though I see you doubt me. But where am I to find you, and who am I to ask for?”

“I have deceived myself, or you are cheating me,” answered Herbert bluntly, and speaking in English; “but come at all events. You will find me at the castle—ask for Colonel Herbert, or the English Ritter. They will show you where I lodge.”

“Be sure I will be there,” rejoined Algernon; “I did not know you were a countryman; but that will make the evening pass only the more pleasantly, for we shall have thoughts in common, as well as a common language;

and, to say sooth, though this German is a fine tongue, yet, while speaking it badly, as I do, I feel like one of the mountebanks we see in fairs dancing a saraband in fetters.”

“You speak it well enough,” answered his companion, “and it is a fine rich tongue; but at the court, with the usual levity of such light places, they do not value their own wholesome dialect. They must have a dash of French, forsooth; and use a language which they do not half know, and which, if they did, is not half as good a one as their own—a poor pitiful whistling tongue, like the wind blowing through a key-hole without the melody of the Italian, the grandeur of the Spanish, the richness of the German, or the strength of the English.”

“Yet is a good language for conversation,” replied Algernon Grey, willing to follow upon any track that led from the subject of his rencontre with Obertraut.

“To say things in a double sense, to tickle the ears of light women, and make bad jests upon good subjects,” rejoined Herbert, whose John Bull prejudices seemed somewhat strong; “that is all that it is good for. Now look here,” he continued, as they reached a commanding point of the hill, “did you ever see a place so badly fortified as this! There is not much to be done with it that is true; for it is commanded by so many accessible points, that it would cost the price of an empire to make it a fortress. Yet if the Elector would spend upon strengthening his residence against his enemies, one-half of what he is throwing away upon laying out that stupid garden, I would undertake to hold it out for a year and a day against any force that king or emperor could bring against it.”

“Something might be done, it is true,” answered the young Englishman; “but it could never be made a strong place, domineered as it is by all these mountains. If you fortified them up to the top, it would require an army to garrison them.”

“Ay, that is the mistake that will be committed by engineers to the last day, I believe,” answered Herbert, who had his peculiar notions on all subjects. “They think they must fortify every commanding point. But there is another and better method of guarding them. Render them inaccessible to artillery, that is all that requires to be done, and then they need no further defence. On the contrary, they become ramparts that will crumble to no balls. There is no escarpment like the face of a rock. Now this same mad gardener-fellow, this Saloman de Caus, who is working away there: he has filled up half a valley, thrown down half a mountain, and the same labour and money, spent in another way, would have rendered every point inaccessible from which a fire could be opened on the castle.—But, look there! Horses are gathering at the gates, and men in gilded jackets. The prince and his fair dame, and all the wild boys and girls of the court are going out upon some progress or expedition—I must hasten down as fast as I can, for I want to speak with one of them before they go.—Remember the hour, and fail not. Can you find your way back?”

“Oh, yes! no fear!” answered Algernon

Grey, "I will be with you to-night," and waving his hand, Herbert hurried down towards the castle.

CHAPTER VI.

"TONY," cried the page, standing in the gateway of the Golden Stag, and turning half-round towards a sort of covered, half-enclosed shed or booth in the court-yard, where the English servant, who had accompanied the two travellers on their journey to Heidelberg, was cleaning a pair of his master's silver stirrups, "here's a man inquiring for my lord, and I can not make out a word that he says."

"What does he want?" cried Tony from the shed, rubbing away as hard as if his life depended upon making the stirrups look brighter than the groom had been able to render them.

"I can't tell," replied the boy; "but he seems to want to give me a hundred crowns."

"Take them, take them," rejoined the man, sagaciously, "and ask no questions. I'll tell you what, Frill, always take gold when you can get it. It comes slow, goes fast, and calls a man master long: a very changeable servant: but a very useful one, while we have him; and there is no fear of his growing old in our service. Don't let the man know you can speak French, or he might put you to disagreeable interrogatories. Pocket and be silent; it is the way many a man becomes great in this world."

The advice was given in that sort of bantering tone, which showed evidently that it was not intended to be strictly followed, and the page, taking the crowns, held them up before the eyes of the man who brought them, saying: "For Algernon Grey?"

"Ja, Ja!" said the German servant; "for Algernon Grey;" and adding a word or two more, which might have been Syriac for aught the page knew, he withdrew, leaving the money in the boy's hands.

As soon as he was gone, Freville or Frill, as he was familiarly termed by the household, walked back to where his companion was at work, and quietly counted over the money upon the loose board which formed the only table of the shed.

"I must give this to some one to keep, till my lord's return," he said: "will you take care of it, Tony?"

"Not I," replied the servant; "I repeat the Lord's Prayer every morning and evening; the first time, to keep me out of temptation by day; the second, to defend me against it by night—I'll have none of it, Master Frill; it is a good sum, and too much for any poor man's pocket, especially where the pocket-hole is wide, and the bottom somewhat leaky."

"I will take it up to Sir William, then," said the boy; "for I won't keep it myself. It would be risking my lord's money sadly. Even now my fingers begin to feel somewhat sticky, as if I had been handling the noses of horse-chestnut buds."

"Get you gone, for a graceless young villain," answered Tony; "what have you to do with the noses of other men's children? you will have enough to do with your own, if I guess

right; but as to the money, methinks it is quite as safe in your pocket as Sir William's."

"Why, you don't think he would keep it, Tony?" said the page, in an inquiring tone.

"As to keeping it," answered Tony, "that's as it may be. He never could keep his own, therefore why should he keep other people's! but between you and I, Frill—" and he dropped his voice as if he did not wish to be overheard—"our young lord is not likely to gain much by Sir William's company. We did very well without him; and though he may not choose to pick my lord's pocket of hard gold, he may take from him what gold will not buy. I have a strange notion, somehow, that it was not altogether for love he came. If it were, why did not he come long before? But I remember him well, when he was a boy; and he was a cunning devil then; as full of mischief as a pistachio-nut. Why he hung the butterfly hatch with a wire like a bird-trap; and the moment old Jonas put his hand out, it fell and nearly chopped off his fingers."

This was a jest fitted to the meridian of a boy's understanding; and he burst into a fit of laughter at the anecdote.

"Ay, ay," continued Tony, "it would have passed as a wild lad's fun, if we had not known that he had a spite at Jonas, who, one day, when he was thirsty, refused him a cup of hyppocras that he wanted, and would only give him a jug of ale.—But who in the name of silks and satins, is this peeping about the court on the tips of his toes, with rosettes and sword-knots enough to swallow him up? It is a page of the court, I do believe. To him, Frill, to him! Speak French to this one, for he looks as if he had been dieted on comfits and spiced wine; and nothing will go down with him, depend upon it, unless it be garnished with French tongue."

Following the suggestion of his companion, Frill advanced, and the two pages met in the midst of the court-yard, where they stood bowing and complimenting each other with an extravagance of courtesy which had nearly overpowered good Tony with laughter.

"My heavens! what a pair of monkeys," he exclaimed. "Take away their cloaks, and stick a tail through their satin breeches, and you have got the beast as perfect as at a puppet-show. Look at that little monster, Frill, if he has not wriggled himself into an attitude in which he cannot stand while I count four. There, 'tis all over; and now he twists to the other side. What does he want, Frill?" he continued, raising his voice; "talk to him, boy, and don't stand there grinning like a cat-ape."

"He comes down from the castle," answered Frill, turning round, very well satisfied with the graces he had been displaying, "to ask my lord and Sir William to join the court in a progress to Schönau."

"Tell him Master Algernon Grey is out, and Heaven knows when he will be back again," exclaimed Tony, who was wearied with the devil's fool air of the pages. "What does the devil's fool say now?" he continued, when Frill had rendered the reply he dictated, and received a speech and a low bow in return.

"He says I must tell Master William Lovet, then," replied the page; and conducting the other youth ceremoniously back to the threshold of the gateway, he took leave of him after some farther civil speeches on the one part, and directions on the other.

"There, go and tell Sir William," said Tony, when the boy rejoined him, "and lay the money on the table in our lord's room. And bark you, Frill, you may as well keep an eye on Sir William's doings; I've doubts, Frill, I have doubts; and I should like to know what he is seeking; for I can't help thinking there's more under his jerkin than God's will and a good conscience."

"If I thought he meant my lord any harm," answered the boy, boldly, "I'd drive my dagger into him."

"Pooh! nonsense; prick him with a needle or a cobbler's awl," answered Tony; "you'd only let him blood and make him more feverish towards spring time. No, no, my boy, he'll give no cause for offence; but a man may do more harm sometimes with a simple word than with a drawn sword. I'll watch him well, however; do you so too; and if you find out anything, let me know. Now, away with you, away with you, and tell the good man above; for if he do not make haste, he will not be in time, and then your young bones are likely to suffer."

The page turned to obey, but he had scarcely reached the archway, when William Lovet issued forth, descending from above, and called loudly for his horse.

The page's communication, however, seemed to make an alteration in his purpose; and after pausing for a moment or two to think, he re-entered the house, ordering everything to be prepared for him to join the train of Frederic and Elizabeth, as soon as he heard them coming down the hill.

William Lovet was a very different man in the solitude of his own chamber and in the company of his cousin. He now waited some twenty minutes, expecting almost every moment to hear the approach of the cavalcade, which was to pass before the windows; but he showed no impatience, no lover-like haste to join the lady at whose suggestion he doubted not the invitation had been given. Sitting at the table, with his hat cast down and his sword taken out of the belt, he leaned his head upon his hand, and seemed buried in meditation. His brow was contracted, and heavy with apparently gloomy thought; and his hand played with the curls of his long dark hair unconsciously. Like many men of strong passions, who set a careful guard upon their tongue when any other human being is near to hear and comment on their words, but feel painfully the restraint then put upon themselves, he was apt, as if for relief, to suffer the secret counsels of his heart to break forth at times, when he felt perfectly certain they would reach no other ear but his own. And this was one of those moments when the workings of strong purposes within him forced him to give way to the dangerous habit. It was no long-continued monologue that he spoke, no loud and vehement outbursts of passion; but broken fragments of sentences—as if a portion of his

thoughts would clothe themselves in words, and were suddenly checked before they were complete—came forth muttered and disjoined from his lips.

"It must do this time," he said; and then he fell into thought again, continuing, in about a minute after, "If it do not, means must be found to make it—the time is very short. In another year he goes back—to think of his having wasted full four years amongst all that could tempt a man! He must be stone—but he is touched now, or I am mistaken—I must get this woman to help me—make her a tool when she thinks herself a conqueror! Ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed aloud. "I will never leave it till it is finished. It may cost a good deal yet; for he is not easily led, that's clear. Example, example! That has been always wanting. We will accustom his mind to it—break him in like a young colt that first flies from the hand, but soon suffers every child to pat him. Ay, he is in the high road, if he do not take a flight and dart off; but surely, in the wide world of accidents, we shall find something, which, improved by skilful management, will keep him here till that same glittering web of golden threads, called love's net, is round him—then let the poor stag struggle, and pant, and toss about, he will not easily break through, and the prize is mine."

His farther thoughts were interrupted by a knock at the door. "Come in," he said; and then exclaimed, in surprise, as the very object of his contemplation stood before him, "Why, Algernon, you have become mighty ceremonious."

"Nay," answered Algernon Grey, laughing, "I thought you were not alone; for I heard one voice speaking, at least; and, with a gentleman of your pursuits, one can never tell how inopportune a visit may be."

"Pshaw!" cried Lovet; "tis a bad habit I have from my mother. We rash and thoughtless folks, unlike you calm and cautious ones, cannot keep the secrets of our bosom in the safe casket of the heart. We must speak out our thoughts, whatever they may be; and, if we can find no other man to tell them to, we tell them to ourselves."

"The safest confidant by far," answered Algernon Grey. "What now, boy?" he continued, turning to the page, who had followed him into the room, and was waiting at hand for an opportunity to speak.

"May it please you, noble sir," replied the page, "a man, with a badge upon his arm, brought hither a hundred crowns, whence or why I could not make out, for he had neither French nor English; but he said Algernon Grey well enough; and so I laid them in your chamber."

"I understand," replied his master; "what more?"

"A page from the court, sir," answered the boy; "a very gallant youth, full of fine essences and rich conceits, with satin in abundance, and no lack of ribands—"

"On my life, he must have been your counterpart, Frill," exclaimed his master, laughing; and, turning to his companion, he added: "This boy has been studying Sidney or Lilly, or some high-flown writer. Well, now

delicate Frill, what said your delicate young friend?"

"He brought a message, noble sir," replied the page, "inviting Messieurs Algernon Grey and William Lovet to join the cavalcade of the court, going joyously to Schonau. They were to pass by the inn in half an hour."

"And, pray, how did this ingenuous youth deliver himself?" asked Algernon Grey.

"Oh! with marvellous fineness, my lord," replied the page, "with every courteous invention that his genius could suggest."

"But the tongue, Master Frill, the tongue?" cried Algernon; "if you could not understand one man, how could you understand the other?"

"He spoke French, my lord, with the utmost perfection," replied the boy.

"Come, Algernon, you are wasting time," exclaimed Lovet; "order your horses and your people, or you will be too late."

Algernon Grey mused for a single instant, and then replied: "I do not go, William."

"Nay, not go!" exclaimed his friend.

"Why, you cannot help yourself, unless you would be called the Great Bear of England. In every country of the world such an invitation from the prince is considered a command."

"What reply did you make, Frill?" asked the boy's master.

"I said what Tony told me," replied the page, "namely, 'Master Algernon Grey is out, and Heaven knows when he will return.'"

"I shall not go, William," repeated the young gentleman, in a thoughtful tone; "I have my own reasons, and assuredly I do not ride to-day."

"Then you are either going to fight a duel, make love, or, in the silent and tender solitude of your chamber in an inn, give yourself up to sweet meditation of your lady's ankles," replied William Lovet, resuming his usual bantering tone. "Methinks, I see you, sitting with the indicator digit of your dexter hand pressed softly on the delicate cheek of youth, the eyebrow raised, one eye to heaven, the other to earth, with a slight poetical squint upon your countenance, and your bosom heaving sighs like a pot of hot broth.—Come, come, Algernon, cast off these humours, or turn anchorite at once. Live like other men, and don't go about the world as if your grandmother's brocade petticoat were hanging forever over your head, like an extinguisher, putting out the flame of youth, and health, and strength, and love, and life. Look about you; see if you can find one single man, of your own age, bearing willingly about upon his shoulders scruples enough to cram a pedlar's pack full of wares, as flimsy and worthless as any it ever contained. Be a man, be a man! Surely, your boyhood is past; and you have no longer to fear the pedagogue's rod, if you stray a little beyond the tether of your mother's apron-string."

Algernon Grey smiled calmly, but merely nodded his head, saying: "I shall not go, Lovet, and all the less for a laugh. If I could be turned from my purposes by a jest, I should think myself a boy, indeed. You will find that out at last, good friend. But, hark, there are the trumpets; get you gone, and good fortune attend you. Call out his horse, Frill, that he

may not imitate my sullen boorishness, and keep the princely party waiting."

"Well," cried Lovet, abrubbing his shoulders, "most reverend cousin, I will wish you a good morning. In your solemn prayers and devout outpourings of the heart, remember your poor sinful cousin, and especially petition that he may never see the evil of his ways, nor let one pleasure slip from him that fortune offers to his lip. It is a devout prayer; for if I did not enjoy myself I should do something much worse; and the devil would not only have me in the end, but in the beginning. Adieu, adieu! Here they come: I hear the clatter;" and running to the door he closed it sharply behind him, while Algernon Grey, without approaching too near, turned to the widow and gazed out into the market-place.

The next instant a gay and splendid train swept up, preceded by two trumpeters in gorgeous liveries. Magnificent horses, many-coloured apparel, gold and embroidery, graceful forms, and joyous bearing, rendered the party one which any young heart might have been glad to join; but the eye of Algernon Grey ran over the various groups of which it was composed, seemingly seeking some particular object, with a curious and inquiring glance. It rested principally on the various female figures of the princess's train; but almost all the ladies wore the small black mask, or hoop, then common at the court of France, and sometimes, though not so frequently, seen in England. The heat of the day and the power of the sun gave them a fair excuse, in the care of their complexions, for adopting a mode most favourable to intrigue; and, whoever it might be that the young gentleman's eye sought for in the cavalcade, he could not ascertain, with any certainty, which she was.

The etiquette of the court prevented the train from stopping for any of the expected party; but, before it had defiled toward the bridge, the horse of William Lovet dashed forward from the gateway; and, after a low reverence to the Elector, he fell back and attached himself to the side of one of the ladies in the train, who greeted him with a playful nod.

Algernon Grey seated himself at the table, leaned his head thoughtfully upon his hand, and remained in that position for nearly a quarter of an hour.

"No," he said at length, "no, I will not risk her happiness or my own—I will not do it again—it has been once too often."

He rose as he spoke, and after giving some orders to his servants, strolled down to the river's side, and there, hiring a rude bark, many of which were moored to the bank, he directed the boatman to let it drop slowly down the stream. The hours passed dully, though he was not one of those to whom the silent communion of the heart with itself is wearisome. But there was a cause why that calm meditation, in which he had often found true pleasure, was not now a resource. He tried to cast it off, to fix his mind upon subjects foreign to that upon which his heart was resolved to dwell; and the struggle to escape from an ever recurring object of thought is always heavy labor. Still the hours flew, though with a lagging wing; and when he calculated that the time of

his promised visit to Colonel Herbert at the castle was approaching, he returned to the town, and making some change in his apparel, walked slowly up the hill.

The sun was indeed declining, but when he reached the gates of the castle, which stood open, the clock in the bridge tower struck seven, and showed him that he was earlier on the way than he had proposed to be. "Well," he thought, "it matters not. The great and the gay are all absent, and I can stroll about the gardens and courts till the hour comes. Doubtless they will give me admission."

He found no difficulty in gaining entrance, and a servant, of whom he inquired for the lodging of Colonel Herbert, courteously accompanied him across the court-yard, saying he would point it out. Entering the building at the further angle of the court, they passed under the arcade of three stages near the Knights' hall, and then through a long stone passage, to the foot of a flight of steps in the open air, above the highest of which, on a level with his own breast, Algernon Grey saw a wide stone platform, like that of an enormous rampart, surrounded by a balustrade flanked by two small octagon turrets. The tops of the mountains on the other side of the Neckar appeared above the balustrade, the clear blue sky was seen over head, and the evening song of one of the autumn singing birds made itself heard from the castle gardens, rising clear and melodious over the dull hum which came up from the city below.

"I am half an hour before my time," said the young gentleman to the servant, "and if you will just point out to me which is Colonel Herbert's lodging, I will wait here till the hour appointed. I may as well pass the minutes in this pleasant place as any where else."

"This is the Altan, sir," replied the man; "the view from it is greatly admired; and if you turn to the right at the end, it will lead you by the only passage there to a door in the first tower—you see it there. The English knight's lodging is above; and you cannot miss your way. You might, indeed, go round by the arsenal; but the sentinel will not let you pass, unless I am with you."

"Oh, I shall find it easily, I doubt not," answered the young Englishman; and adding thanks, and a substantial token thereof, he mounted the steps and walked slowly forward to the parapet, while a crowd of the beautiful objects which only nature's treasury can display, rushed upon his eyes in dream-like splendour. Hardly had the first feeling of admiration been felt, however, when a slight exclamation of surprise uttered close to him made him turn his head towards one of the two small octagon turrets which stood at either extreme end of the Altan.

The door was open, and he beheld coming forward a female figure which it required but one look to recognize. There was a well-pleased smile upon her countenance, bland, frank, and simple. She saw her agreeable companion of the night before; she remembered with satisfaction, and without one agitating thought, the pleasant hours she had spent with him, and advanced gaily and gladly to meet him, only conscious of friendship and esteem.

Algernon Grey was better read in the world than his companion Lovet believed—ay, even in its most difficult page, the heart of woman.

Nevertheless, though he marked the lady's manner, and instantly drew conclusions from it, those conclusions were not altogether just. He saw that straightforward, well-pleased look—the free and unembarrassed air, and he said within his heart,—“She at least is in no danger. It is for myself I must beware.”

The courtesies of life, however, were not to be omitted; and, though with a grave look, he met his fair companion with the usual salutations of the morning, proposing to himself to speak a few words, and then withdraw. But there are as strong attractions as those of the magnet for the needle; and once by her side, resolution failed.

"I am very glad to see you," she said, with the same beaming look; "I had come out hither for a solitary walk upon the Altan while the court is absent, and little thought of having a companion who can enjoy this scene as I do."

"How comes it you are not with the gay party?" asked Algernon Grey; "I thought all the world had gone."

"But you and I," answered the lady, "and one whom you have not seen, but whom you should know before you leave this place; for a wiser or a kinder being does not live than the Electress Dowager, Louisa Juliana. No, I stayed to read to and amuse her; for she has been ill lately—what with some anxiety and some sorrow. She would not let me remain longer, or I would gladly have done so; for she has been as a mother to me when I most needed a mother's care—and what can I ever do to repay her?"

"Love her," answered the young Englishman; "that is the repayment from noble heart to noble heart. But this is indeed a splendid view! What a confusion of magnificent objects present themselves at once to the eye, with the sun setting over yon wide plain and those golden hills beyond."

"Ay," answered Agnes, following with her eyes the direction in which he pointed, "and those golden hills hide in their bosom, as in a rich casket, a thousand jewels. There is not a valley among them that is not rich in loveliness, not a hill or craggy steep that does not bear up some castle or abbey, some legend of old times, or some deep history. Can you not mark, too, the current of the glorious Rhine, the King of Europe's streams, as he flows onward there!—No! Beside those towers, you catch a glistening of the waters as they pour forward to revel in the magnificence beyond."

"I see," answered Algernon Grey, "I always love the Rhine, with its vine-covered hills and castled rocks and its storied memories. Its course seems to me like that of some fine old poem, where, in even flow, and amidst images of beauty, the mind is led on with ever varying delight till in the end it falls into calm, solemn, contemplative repose."

"I know little of poetry or poets," replied Agnes. "Some, indeed, I have read, especially some of the Italian poets, and they are very beautiful, it is true; but I fancy it is better to know the poem than the poet, the work rather

than the writer—at least so it has been with all those I have seen."

"It is true, I believe," said Algernon Grey; "our thoughts are generally more poetic than our actions, almost always than our demeanour; invariably, I may say, than our persons; and when we remember, that the highest quality of the human mind places before us in a poem only that which mature and deliberate judgment pronounces to be the best of its fruits, it is not wonderful that the man should seem less, when we can see him near, than the poem gave us cause to expect."

In such conversation as this, of an elaborate and somewhat didactic turn, the young Englishman thought himself perfectly safe. He fancied he could discuss poetry and poems, beautiful scenery, the grand works of nature or art, with the loveliest being ever eye beheld, without the slightest danger to himself or others. Unwarned by the fate of Beatrice and her lover, or of Abelard and his pupil, he fancied that on such cold and general themes, he could discourse in safety, even with the fair creature beside him; but he forgot, that through the whole world of the beautiful and the excellent, in nature and in art, there is a grand tie which links with the rest the heart of man: that sympathy is love, in a shallower, or a deeper degree; and he forgot, moreover, that the transition is so easy, by the ever open doors of association, from the most cold and indifferent things to the warmest and the dearest, that the heart must be well guarded, the mind well assured, before it ventures to deal with aught that excites the fancy in companionship with one who has already some hold upon the imagination.

Insensibly, they knew not how, their conversation deviated from the mere objects tangible to the senses, to the effects produced by those objects on the mind. From the mind they went to the heart; and Agnes, for a time, went on to talk with glowing eloquence, of all those feelings and emotions, of which, it was evident enough to her companion, she spoke by hearsay rather than by experience. Her words were careless, brilliant, even, perhaps, we may say light, in its better sense, for some time after their discourse took that turn. She jested with the subject, she sported with it—like a child who, having found a shining piece of steel, makes a plaything of it, unknowing that it is a dagger which, with a light blow, may cut the knot of life. Suddenly, however, from some feeling, undefined, even to herself, she stopped in full career, became thoughtful, serious, more avaricious of her words. A deeper tone pervaded them when they were spoken; and she seemed to have found unexpectedly, that she was dealing with things which at some time might have a more powerful and heartfelt interest for herself, and that she had better escape from such topics, treating them gravely, whilst she was obliged to treat of them at all. Her conversation, in short, was like a gay pleasure-boat, which quits the shore in sunshine and merriment, but, finding itself far from land makes it way back with earnest speed with the first cloud that gathers on the sky.

Her altered manner called Algernon Grey to himself; and, as they turned back again along

the Altan, he said, anxious to fly from a danger which he felt had its fascinations too, but yet mingling with the adieu he was about to speak such a portion of feeling as might pass for ordinary gallantry: "I must now leave you, I believe, for the sun is so low, that it warns me of my engagement to spend this evening with a countryman of ours, named Colonel Herbert, whom I have made acquaintance with this morning—indeed, it is past the hour."

"Oh, I will show you the way," answered Agnes, with a smile; "I am going thither, too; but do stay for an instant to look at that star rising over the Odenwald. How clear and calm it shines! How round, and full, and unvarying! It must be a planet; and I cannot help thinking often, that woman's true sphere is like that of yonder star. There may be brighter things in the heavens, twinkling and sparkling with transcendent light; but her fate is like that of the planet, to wander round one sole object, from which she receives all her brightness, in constant, tranquil, peaceful watchfulness, calm but not dull, and bright but not alone—now come."

CHAPTER VII.

In a large circular room, with a massive column in the midst, from which sprang the groins of the numerous arches which formed the vault, sat the stout soldier Herbert, with his two companions, Algernon Grey and the fair Agnes. The chamber itself, notwithstanding its unusual form, was comfortable and highly decorated. The floor, somewhat unusual in those times, and in that country, was of wood; the stone column in the centre was surrounded by a richly-carved oak seat, furnished with cushions of crimson velvet; and the heavy mass of the pillar, which rose above, was broken and relieved by four groups of armour gathered into the shape of trophies. Seats and bookcases, and those articles of furniture which are now called *dagères*, all likewise of oak, ornamented with velvet and fringes of a crimson colour, occupied the spaces between the windows, and on the one side, midway from the pillar to the wall, was a table covered with clean white linen, supporting various baskets of rich and early fruit, with wine and bread, but no other viands.

On the other side was also a table, on which were cast negligently some books, a pair of gauntlets, two or three daggers from different lands, and a number of objects, valuable either for their rarity or for the beauty of their workmanship. A fine picture stood on the ground, leaning against a chair, at one point; an antique marble vase, richly sculptured, was seen at another; a lance appeared resting on the shoulder of a statue; and the mask of a satyr, from some Roman building, was placed in the gaping vizor of a helmet which stood at the foot of a bookcase. The whole was lighted by cressets hung against the column, which shed a soft and pleasant lustre through the wide room.

The host and his guests were seated at the table where the fruit was spread, and they seemed to be enjoying highly their simple and

innocent meal. Herbert himself was gayer in manner than he had been in the morning; Agnes gave way to the flow of her young bright fancies with as little restraint, or even less, perhaps, than when she had been with Algernon Grey alone; and the young Englishman feeling that, for that evening at least, it was useless to struggle against the fate that had brought them together, yielded his spirit to the pleasure of the moment, and resolved to enjoy the cup which he had not sought to taste.

It must not indeed be supposed that the conversation was all of a bright or cheerful character; for it went on, in its natural course, from subject to subject, resembling in its aspect a rich autumn day, where glowing sunshine and sombre masses of cloud alternately sweep over the prospect, giving a varied interest to the scene.

The conversation of Herbert himself was not in general of a very cheerful tone; it was occasionally pungent, shrewd, and keen in the remarks, but that of a man who, having mingled much with the world—partaken of its pleasures, shared in its strife, and known its sorrows—had withdrawn for several years from any very active participation in the pursuits of other men, still watching eagerly as a spectator the scenes in which he had once been an actor.

The connexion between him and Agnes had somewhat puzzled Algernon Grey at his first entrance. Their evident familiarity, their affection one for the other, had perhaps pained him for an instant—it was but for an instant: for, though she gave the old soldier both her hands, and kissed with her glowing lips his weather-beaten cheek, it was all done so frankly, so candidly, that the young Englishman felt there must be something to warrant it—that there was nothing to be concealed. He then asked himself more than once, what the relationship could be? but it was not till he had been there nearly an hour, that the fair girl, in addressing Herbert, called him "My dear uncle."

Algernon Grey asked himself why he should have felt pained at her familiarity with any man, whether her near relative or not!—but it was a question which he could not or would not answer, and he hurried away from it to other things. "I knew, not," he said, "that this fair lady was your kinswoman, Colonel Herbert, though we spoke of her at good Dr. Altling's this morning."

"You gave me no reason to know that it was of her you spoke," answered Herbert with a smile.

"Yes, methinks I did," said the other gaily: "I told you I had been at the court revel last night, and had passed the hours with a lady whom I described right well."

"Oh, let me hear, dear uncle! let me hear!" exclaimed Agnes; "I should so much like to hear a stranger's description of myself,—you must tell me all he said."

"That is because you are vain, my child," answered the old soldier; "you would not like to hear it, if you thought he had blamed you. Nay, I will not tell you a word."

"Then I will divine for myself," cried Agnes; "and you shall see whether I am vain or not. He said he had met a wild romantic girl, not

very courtly in her manners, who had talked to him all night on themes which might have suited a painter or a chaplain better than a court lady; that she danced better than she talked,—dressed better than she danced,—and had a sovereign objection to love-speeches."

Algernon Grey smiled, and Herbert replied, tapping her cheek with his fingers, but looking round to their young companion: "You see, sir, in what these women's vanity consists—dancing and dressing! But you are wrong, Agnes, altogether. He said not a word of your dress,—he took no notice of your dancing,—he did not object to your prattle,—and he told me nothing of his having made you love-speeches."

"Neither did he," cried Agnes, with her cheek glowing at the conclusion which her relation had drawn; "we heard many a one passing around us, but he made none. That was the reason I liked his conversation, and I told him so."

"You tell too readily what is in your heart, my child," said Herbert; "and yet, good faith, I would not have it otherwise. But of one thing you may be sure, that the man I would ask here was too much a gentleman to say aught of a lady which was not pleasing to my ear. What he said came to this: that you were a good girl, and unlike most others he had met. Was it not so, Master Grey?"

"Somewhat differently expressed and coloured," answered Algernon Grey; "but, at all events, the substance was no worse;" and, willing to change the theme, he went on to say, "That good Dr. Altling seems a zealous and enthusiastic man. It is strange that in the commerce with the world of a long life, he has not lost more of the fire which generally burns brightly only in youth."

"He has seen little of life," answered Herbert, "knows little of the world, or he would not entertain such high hopes from such doubtful prognostications."

"Then you think his expectations regarding the result of this election will be disappointed?" asked the young Englishman.

Herbert mused gravely, and then replied: "I know not what portion of his expectations you allude to, or whether you mean all. If the latter, I say some of them will certainly be verified: Frederick will be elected, of that I entertain no doubt. These stern Bohemians will never choose a drunkard and a knave, and with that exception there is no other competitor of name. Then, again, that there will be the grand, perhaps the only opportunity that ever will be seen of rendering the pure Protestant faith predominant in Germany,—nay, more, of breaking the Austrian chain from the neck of the captive empire: I do not at all deny that the opportunity will be there, but will there be men to seize it? That is what I doubt. Will there be men who, having stretched forth the hand to take the golden occasion, will not, when they have clutched it, suffer it to slip from their grasp? That is the great question; for to fail is worse than not to undertake. The head on which the crown of Bohemia now falls should be one full of those rare energies which lose no chance, and which command success; there should be experience or genius, and, above all, indomitable firmness of character and activity."

of mind. He should be a man of one grand purpose,—cautious as resolute, watchful as enterprising, leading not led, obstinate in preference to wavering,—with the whole powers of heart and mind bent to the attainment of a single object;—with neither eyes, nor ears, nor thoughts for aught but that. The path is upon a glacier, with a precipice below: one slip is destruction. Now, good as he is,—brave, intelligent, noble, sincere, devoted,—is the Elector endowed with powers that will bear him up through dangers and difficulties such as the world has seldom seen?"

"Often, where princes themselves would fail," answered Algernon Grey, "wise counsellors and great generals render them successful."

"He must be a wise prince, to choose wise counsellors," said Herbert. "Have we any here?—Besides, if you would calculate the results of the strife about to spring up, look at the materials of the two parties. This is, in truth, a struggle betwixt the Protestants and Papists of Germany. Now, there is something in the very nature of the two religions which gives disunion to the one, consolidation to the other. The Papists are all agreed on every essential point; they are all tutored in the same school, look to the same objects, have in the most important matters the same interests. The least attack upon their religion is a rallying cry for them all; their wills bend to its dictates, their banners unfurl at its call, their swords spring forth in its defence. They are one nation, one tribe, by a stronger tie than common country or common origin. They are one in religion, and the religion is one. But what is the case with the Protestants? Split into sects, divided into parties, recognising no authority but their own individual judgments, they hate each other, with a hatred perhaps stronger than that which they feel towards the Romanists; or are cold to each other, which is worse. There is no bond between them but the worst of bonds—a common enmity to another faith. No, no, the whole tendencies of one party are to division, the whole tendencies of the other to union, and union is strength."

"Nay, my dear uncle," cried Agnes, "to hear your arguments, one would think you a Papist."

"Hold your wild tongue, you unreasoning child," answered Herbert, good-humouredly; "my arguments go to quite a contrary end. Were there not innate truth unimpeachable in the doctrines of the Protestants, there would not be one sect of them left by this time, so potent are the means arrayed against them, so feeble are the earthly bonds that hold them together. Were it not for the power of truth upon their side, the first blast of wind would blow them from the earth; but great is truth, and it will prevail, however weak be the hands that support it, however strong the arms raised to crush it."

"Yours is a gloomy view, nevertheless," rejoined Algernon Grey; "but we must still trust to the vigour of truth for the support of a just cause. Many will doubtless fall away in the hour of need. Of that I am aware; but if they carry with them only their own weakness and the divisions of the party, their absence will but give strength."

"Well, let us talk of it no more," answered Herbert; "the book of fate has so many pages unopened that who can tell what may be written on the next? That casque which you see there, crowning the arms on this side of the pillar, was worn by the good and great Coligni. Did he think when he last carried it, that the day of St. Bartholomew, then so nigh, would see his massacre and that of his companions? Did he think that the king, who then leaned upon his shoulder, promising to act by his counsel in all things, would command his assassination? or that the gallant young prince, whom he appreciated in most things so justly, would abandon the faith for which they had both shed their blood, and be murdered by one of the base instruments of the religion he adopted? He must be a madman or inspired, who ventures to prophesy even the deeds or events of to-morrow."

"And this, then, was the casque of Coligni?" said Algernon Grey, rising and approaching the pillar; "one of the greatest men, undoubtedly, that ever lived, whose spirit seemed to revel in misfortunes, and whose genius appeared, even to his enemies, but the more bright for defeat."

"Ay, fortune was only constant against him," answered Herbert, following with Agnes, "he went on with still increasing renown and disaster, till his glory and his reverses were closed by his assassination."

"The body perished," said Agnes in a sweet low tone, "and with it all that was perishable. The immortal remained, the fame that calumny could never sully, to this earth; the spirit that triumphed over every reverse, to heaven, from whence it came."

Herbert laid his hand upon her shoulder, gazing at her with a well-pleased smile. "You may well speak proudly of him, my child," he said, "for your noble kinsman has left a name which the world cannot match. There are some strange things here," he continued abruptly, turning to Algernon Grey. "Do you see this ancient cuirass shaped almost like a globe?"

"Ay, and that ghastly hole in the left breast," cried Agnes, "what a tale that tells! Without a word one reads there that by the wound then given when the lance pierced through the strong iron, a gallant spirit was sent from earth on the long dark journey. What tears were then shed! How the bride or the young widow wept in inconsolable grief! How brethren or parents mourned! What ties were broken, what long cherished hopes all blasted, what bright schemes and glad purposes then all passed away like a dream!"

Algernon Grey fixed his eyes upon her, while she spoke, with a look of sad and solemn earnestness. It was intense and thoughtful, yet full of admiration, and lasted till she ceased; but Agnes saw it not, for her eyes were raised to her uncle's face, and her whole spirit was in the words she uttered.

"It is the pleasant part of life, I fear," he said at length, "which thus passes like a dream. The painful things remain—ay, and grow too. With the bright days pass the bright thoughts; with the light season dies the light heart. Man has but one summer; if it be clouded, let him

not look for sunshine. Winter will surely come."

"Ay, on this earth," answered Herbert, "there is another climate hereafter, where winter is not. Still you are, in some sense, wrong. Each season has its sunny hours for those who seek them. Youth looks forward to age with apprehension, age to the state beyond. Neither know rightly what is in store. All they are sure of is, that there are deprivations coming of things which they fancy treasures; but still each step of life shows that the most prized jewels of the former were but tinsel and false stones. What will the last stage show of all the rest? That cuirass was young Talbot's, slain in the wars in France: that gap let in his death-wound. A noble spirit passed away to a nobler world; a kind young heart mourned, and went to join him. These are brief tales, soon told. Why should we think more of man's life and death than of the opening and fading of a flower? His immortality itself makes his life the less worth thought, but as he uses it."

"These gauntlets, too," said Algernon Grey, "they seem less ancient than the cuirass, but yet are not of our own times."

"They are those of a king," answered Herbert; "one whom men esteem great; but, like most of the world's great men, with many littlenesses—Francis the First of France."

"All that was great in him," replied Algernon Grey, "belonged to the spirit of a former time. He had a touch of the old chivalrous honour, and compared with others of his day, with our own Harry, and even with his more famous rival, the Emperor Charles, he stands out bright as knight and gentleman, if not as monarch."

"Compare him not with Harry," said Herbert, "that king was a brutal tyrant. He might have been better, indeed, had not men stupidly abolished polygamy, for I dare say he would have been contented to let his wives live, if the laws of society had not made them a burden to him; and so, like most men, he committed great crimes with a pretext, to escape from smaller faults less easily excused." He spoke laughingly, and then added, "But still he was a base, bloody tyrant, an ungrateful friend, an ungenerous master. No, no, Francis was too good to be likened to him. No, compare him with the man whose sword hangs yonder—with Bayard, and then how small the king becomes, how great the simple gentleman!"

"He was noble, indeed!" exclaimed Agnes; "and it is a consolation, too, to see that men admire him more for his gentler than his sterner qualities. Would that they took his lesson more to heart; for of the great men, as they are called, of this world, how few are there whose renown does not rise on deeds of blood and rapine, how few whose monument is not raised on violations of all justice and equity; the marble their fellow-creatures' corpses, and the mortar ruin, devastation, wrong, watered with blood and tears."

Algernon Grey gazed upon her again with the same sad and thoughtful look; and Herbert replied, "Too true, my child; but yet"—and he smiled somewhat sarcastically—"I

have rarely known the lady who did not love these sanguinary gentlemen more than the humble man of peace. It is you, and such as you, who spur us on to war."

"War must be, I fear," answered Agnes; "and Heaven forbid that any gentleman should be a coward, trembling for so light a thing as life; but if, when driven unwillingly to strife, men would, like that great hero you have mentioned, soften the rugged trade by the virtues of the Christian and the knight, protect, defend, support, rather than oppress, injure, and trample down, the warrior would be worthy of all love, and great men would become great indeed. As it is, one turns with horror from the blood-stained page of history, where grasping ambition rides in the tinsel chariot of a false renown, over the cranching bones of whole generations slain. The world's greatness is not for me; and, all woman as I am, dear uncle, I would rather be a nun, mewed in a cloister, than the wife of one of these great men."

She spoke with a fire and energy which Algernon Grey had never seen in her before; but some of her words seemed to affect Herbert more than might have been expected. He walked suddenly back to the table, and seated himself, leaning his head upon his hand, with a sad and gloomy look. Agnes paused a moment, and then drew gently near, laid her hand upon his, kissed his furrowed brow, and murmured, "Forgive me! I did not mean to pain you; I thought not of what I said."

"It is nothing, it is nothing," answered Herbert; "it will pass, dear child;" and almost as he spoke, a servant, dressed in a different livery from that of the court, entered, saying: "The Dowager Electress, madam, has sent to tell you she is ready when you like to come."

"I will be with her directly," answered the fair girl; and turning to Herbert again, she added in a sad tone, "I have given pain enough here, for one night at least.—Farewell, countryman," she continued frankly, holding out her soft white hand to Algernon Grey, "I do not know whether we shall ever meet again; but, methinks, you will remember this night, so unlike any you have probably ever passed."

Her words were free and unembarrassed; but Algernon Grey had deeper feelings in his heart, and he merely replied, "I will;" at the same time, however, he bent his head and pressed his lips upon the hand she gave him. It was a common act of courtesy in those days, marking nothing but a feeling of friendship or respect; and Agnes, receiving it as such, drew the light veil, which had fallen upon her shoulders, over her head, and left the room.

For a single instant Herbert remained seated in the same desponding attitude. Then rousing himself, he turned to his guest, saying: "Come, taste the wine again. It is but sour stuff this Rhenish wine at the best, but this is as good as any."

"It is better than any that I have ever tasted here," answered Algernon; "and I do not dislike these wines. One does not feel as if one were drinking molten fire, as with the heady grape of Burgundy, after which the blood seems to go tingling in fever to the fingers' ends. One more glass, then, to the health of the fair lady who has left us."

"Yes, she is fair," answered Herbert, thoughtfully, after drinking his wine,—"beautiful as her mother, and as good—more gay, but not less thoughtful.—Now, my young friend," he continued, "there is one thing puzzles me in you. That you should think the child lovely does not surprise me, for she is so: I know it, and am accustomed to hear others say so; but she sets so little store by her beauty, that it gives me no pain. There is a difference between admiration and love. It is evident enough that the blind god has naught to do in the case between you and her; but yet you have more than once gazed at her long, and with a sad and serious countenance, as if there were deep thoughts regarding her silently busy at your heart. If you mind not telling them, I would fain hear what those thoughts were."

"I caught myself so gazing," said Algernon, with a smile, "not long before she left the room. It was when she spoke of the horrors and evils of war; and that theme connected itself in my mind with what had passed before. I asked myself, if these bright scenes are destined to be visited by strife and pillage and desolation, what will be the fate of that young fair being, and many others like her. Hardships and rude alarms and the daily peril of life is what men are habituated to from boyhood; but what can women do at such a season! She can but sit still and weep, awaiting her destiny, whatever it may be. The clang of the trumpet, or the roll of the drum, gives her no inspiring occupation to while away the hours of suspense; and, the rude captor's prey in a town taken by assault, death, and worse than death, may be her portion.—Such were the thoughts which moved me on this last occasion. If I stared at her so rudely at any other time, I have forgotten the cause."

"It will be long, I trust," answered Herbert, "very long, before the storm rolls hither, even at the worst; and till it comes, here she is safe enough. But yet, methinks, good friend, your thoughts take a gloomy turn, and somewhat strange for the youth of the present day. With nine men out of ten in every court of Europe—France, England, Germany—we should have naught but gallant speeches, courtly discourses of small hands and beautiful feet, and eyebrows marvellously turned, or lectures upon bravery, what colours suit with what complexions, what ribands and what laces best harmonize, what dress becomes the gay and young, the tall, the short—with an intermixture of sighs and smiles, and some slight touch of roses and other flowers, to give an Arcadian glow to the whole. But here you have been as grave as a judge over a long cause which makes his dinner wait; speaking with all calm solemnity, as if you had never been taught to laugh.—Why so sad, my friend! Time enough for sadness, when real sorrow comes."

Algernon Grey's brow became graver than before; not that he looked hurt or pained, but there was a sort of stern and serious earnestness upon his face, as he replied with brief, slow, pointed words: "Most men have some sad secret in their bosom."

"So young!" said Herbert, musing. "Nay, I think not most men; though some few may."

"Have not you, yourself?" asked Algernon

Grey, fixing his eyes upon him steadfastly; "and none can say what will be the hour for the poisoning of all life's streams;" and he paused and fell into thought.

"I knew not that the lady was your niece," he continued after a time; "nor certainly did I expect to meet her here. I seek not dangerous companionships; and, methinks, her society might well be so to any one whose heart is not a stone. However, she is too free and happy, too tranquil in her thoughts and her soul, to be easily won; and I do trust, when she is won, that she may meet a person well worthy of her."

"Oh, she will do well enough," answered Herbert. "Women always choose ill; but, perhaps, she may not choose at all; and I believe the gross amount of happiness would be on that side, from all I know of men.—We are strange beings, Master Grey—boys unto the last, we covet eagerly each glittering toy we see: and then misuse it, when we have it safe."

These last words gave a different turn to the conversation; and it wandered wide, and lasted long. Before it came to an end, the trumpets of the Elector's party were heard in the courtyard; and Herbert smiled somewhat cynically, but made no observation. Shortly after, the castle clock struck ten; and Algernon Grey took his leave and returned towards his inn on foot, pondering upon the character of the man he had just left, and striving, as we all do when we meet with one unlike the generality of our acquaintance, to plunge beneath the surface and discover the hidden things of mind and heart. These reveries were not so profound, however, as to prevent him from remarking that thick clouds were driving over the sky, while the stars shone out and disappeared at intervals, as the grey vapoury veil was cast over them, or withdrawn. The wind, too, had risen high; and the night was very different from that which had preceded. When he, at length, reached the inn, some drops of rain were falling; and his heart felt sadder, certainly, rather than lighter, from the visit he had paid.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a night of storms and tempests. As is not unusual in hilly districts, thunder, as well as rain, was brought up by the gusty wind. The house, though in the midst of the town, seemed to rock with the violence of the blast. The panelling cracked; the arras waved over the door; the rain poured down in incessant torrents; and when Algernon Grey looked forth from his window, as he did more than once during the long night, he beheld the livid lightning flaming along the streets, reflected as by a mirror from the wet and shining pavement of the causeway. Quick upon the flash came the pealing thunder, as if one of the granite mountains had been riven by the bolt of heaven, and rolled in crashing fragments into the valley below.

It was late ere he retired to rest; and for more than one hour he continued pacing up and down his chamber in deep thought, reproaching himself for weakness in having given himself up to fascinations, which he now found might soon

become too strong for all his resolution to resist. It is a painful moment when a firm and determined mind first discovers in itself that weakness which is in all human nature, when it has to accuse itself of having yielded, even in a degree, to temptations which it had resolved to oppose; when it learns to doubt its own stability and vigour, and is forced, from experience of the past, to attach a condition, dependent upon its own strength or feebleness, to every resolution for the future. It is a painful moment, a moment of apprehension and dread, of doubt and sorrow; and Algernon Grey, more than once, said to himself, "No, I will not go thither again—whether William stays here or not, I will go forward."

He was weary, however, and when he did retire to rest, sleep soon visited his eyelids; but the form which had troubled his waking thoughts, visited him with more calming and pleasing influence in his dreams. Agnes wandered with him, Heaven knows where; no longer bringing with her hesitation and doubt as to his own course; but smiling with all her youthful grace unclouded, and spreading sunshine around her, even to the very depths of his own heart. As so rarely happens, he remembered his dream, too, when he awoke; and it seemed as if imagination was but an agent of Fate, to bind him in those bonds against which he struggled fruitlessly.

It was late ere he unclosed his eyes. The sun was far up in the sky, but still not showing his face upon the earth; for the storm had sunk away into dull heavy rain; and the pattering torrents, which fell from the gutters into the streets, told how heavy was the descending deluge. Large undented wreaths of white vapour were wound round the brows of the hills; and the eye could not penetrate either up or down the valley, beyond a few hundred yards from the spot where the observer stood.

William Lovet was in an ill humor; for he had engaged himself to ride again with the court that morning, if the day were fine. But still his spleen took a merry form; and though his jests were somewhat more bitter than usual, he jeasted still. Often did he look at the sky, and still the same grave blank presented itself till the hour of noon. Then the expanse grew mottled with slight feathery flakes; the flakes separated themselves wider and wider from each other, drew into distinct masses, and left the blue sky visible here and there. The sun shone out over the valley and the plain; but the clouds upon the higher hills looked only the more black and menacing. However, about half-past twelve o'clock, a page came down to the inn with a billet for Master William Lovet, sealed, perfumed, and tied with floss silk of a rose colour, after the most approved mode of tender epistles of a period somewhat antecedent. William Lovet took it eagerly; but yet he could not make up his mind to open it without some slight touches of his own sarcastic humour. He hung the silk upon his little finger, held the note up to Algernon Grey with a gay smile, and then carried it to his nose and to his lips, exclaiming: "Perfumed with sighs, and flavoured with kisses! Verily, verily, Algernon, you are like an anchorite at a feast, with delicate dishes and fine wines before you,

and yet you will not taste—But I must read the dear contents. Witness, all ye gods, that I have sworn no constancy. Of all the silly nations in the world, the Lolophagi were the most foolish; for after having once tasted their favourite food, they could relish no other. Now my unpurverted palate can feast on every sweet thing that is offered it."

While he had been uttering the last words, he had cut the silk and opened the letter; and, having read it through, he turned to his friend, saying, "The expedition is put off till after dinner; but at two we set forth. Do you come, Algernon!"

"Not I," answered Algernon Grey; "I have no invitation."

"That will be soon procured," replied Lovet; "but faith, I will not press you. For the future, you shall follow your own course; for I see it is all in vain to hope for anything like the fire of youth in you. I did think, indeed, when I saw you and that lovely Agnes Herbert together, some spark might be elicited; especially when my fair friend told me that she is as cold as you are: for you see, Algernon,"—and he laid his finger on his breast, with a laughing look—"by striking flint and steel, two hard, cold things, together, men make a fire—but now I give you up. Continue to live on in sanctified decorum, and bring back a virgin heart to England with you. Were you in witty Venice, the ladies of the place would present you with a coral and bells."

"And I would give them in return a veil and a pair of gloves," answered Algernon Grey.

"Oh, they wear masks," cried Lovet.

"I know they do," said his companion, "and I am not fond of masks."

"Well, well, I must have dinner quick, and ride up to the castle," was the reply. "Every one to his own course, and happiness of his own kind to each."

The dinner was obtained. William Lovet equipped himself in his bravery; and Algernon Grey remained at the inn, pondering over the rencontre that was before him. To few men, even of the most gallant and determined, are the hours, preceding a meeting of this kind, the most pleasant in life. And though, perhaps, no man ever lived who had a smaller sense of personal danger than Algernon Grey, yet they were peculiarly painful and disagreeable to him. Bred, like almost every man of noble family at that time, to arms, he had been in his boyhood inured to peril, and accustomed to look death in the face; but still, educated with very strict notions in regard to religion, he could not free his mind from a belief, that to slay a fellow-creature in such an encounter was a crime. The habits of the day, the general custom of society, had their effect upon him, as upon all others; but still a conscientious repugnance lingered in his mind, and produced that gloom which no feeling of apprehension could create. There was no alleviating circumstance either; there was nothing to excite or to carry him forward. He had no personal quarrel with his adversary; he had neither animosity nor anger to stimulate him; and, as I have said, the intervening hours were very dull and painful. He wrote some letters and memoranda, however; more to occupy the time than for any other

reason. He ordered his horse to be ready, and the page to accompany him. He examined his sword-blade, and tried it on the ground; and, at length, when the sun was approaching the horizon on its decline, he mounted and rode slowly out, with a calm, grave air, telling his servants to have supper prepared against his return. Not the slightest suspicion was entertained of his purpose; and the page rode gaily after, looking around at every thing they passed, and wondering whither his master was bound.

When they had approached the river, however, it presented a very different scene from that which had been seen from its banks for several weeks before. The green Neckar, so clear and grassy, was now a turbid torrent, red, swollen, and impetuous. The waters had risen in the course of the day and night several feet, and were dashing against the piers of the bridge and the walls of the curious old castellated houses, which then bordered the river, in impotent fury. Many of the rocks, which in ordinary weather raise their heads high above the stream, were now either entirely covered, or washed over from time to time by the waves, which a strong south-west wind occasioned in its struggle with the angry current of the stream. As the horse of Algernon Grey set its foot upon the bridge, a heavy rumbling sound from the east and north, low but distinct, and pealing long among the hills, told that the dark clouds, which were still seen hanging there, were pouring forth their mingled lightning and rain into the valleys of the Odenwald. But the moment that Algernon Grey had passed the slope of the bridge, he saw before him that which engrossed his whole attention. The Baron of Obertraut was waiting for him under the archway of the opposite bridge-house, although the time appointed had hardly arrived; and, quickening his pace, the young Englishman rode on and joined him. Their salutations were perfectly courteous; and Obertraut remarked, in a calm, indifferent tone, "We are both a little before our time, I think; but the river is still rising, and this road by the bank has sometimes enough water on it to wet our horses' pasterns. With your good leave, I will show you the way. The stream has not yet come up, I see."

Thus saying, he turned to the right at the foot of the bridge, ascending the river; but it may be necessary to say that, at the time I speak of, the right bank of the Neckar presented a very different aspect from that which it now displays. No houses were to be seen between Neunheim on the one hand, and the old religious foundation of Neuburg, now called the Stift, on the other. The road was not elevated as it is now; but ran low, within a few feet of the ordinary level of the stream. The woods upon the Heiligberg, or Holy Mountain, and the other hills towards Neckarsteinach came sweeping down to within a few feet of the road; and, here and there, a path, large or small, according to the necessities of the case, led away up to the north, wherever a village was situated in any of the dells, or a small piece of level ground, terraced upon the mountain, had afforded the peasants an opportunity of planting the apple or plum tree. The vine was not seen,

unless it were a small patch in the neighbourhood of Neunheim, or of the Stift Neuburg.

Along the low horse-road, which served as a towing-path for the boats, the Baron of Obertraut led the young English gentleman, at a slow and quiet pace, till they were within about a third of a mile of the latter place. There the hills receded a little, leaving some more level ground, still apparently thickly wooded; and, at a spot where stood a boatman's hut, with two or three rude barks, moored to the shore, the entrance of a by-way was seen, which narrowed within view, till the space was not larger than would admit the passage of a single horse. At the entrance of this path the Baron drew in his rein, saying to his companion: "We will leave the horses and pages here, if you please, and proceed for a couple of hundred yards on foot."

Algernon Grey consented, of course; and orders were given to the two youths to lead the horses after their masters, as far as they could up the path—which, indeed, could not be done for more than three or four yards—and then to wait there.

"If you will excuse me," continued Obertraut, "I will precede you."

Algernon Grey merely bowed his head, without reply, till the other had gone on forty or fifty yards, when he said: "The sun is going rapidly down, if not gone already behind the hills; and I think, if we do not hurry our pace, we shall not have light."

"Oh, it is the wood makes it so dark here," answered his companion, in a gay and somewhat self-sufficient tone; "we shall have more light in an instant; and the twilight last long here."

Thus saying he walked forward; and in less than two minutes led the way out upon a small green meadow, of not more than a quarter of an acre in extent, the second crop of grass from which had been lately carried away, leaving the turf smooth and short.

"This place seems made for the purpose," said Algernon Grey, drily.

"It is often used for such," answered Obertraut, advancing into the midst, and throwing off his cloak.

Algernon Grey followed his example, drew his sword, and laid the belt and sheath with the cloak.

"Our weapons are of the usual length I suppose," said Obertraut, speaking through his teeth; for there was more bitterness in his heart than he wished to appear.

"I really do not know," answered Algernon Grey; "but you had better measure them;" and he laid his by the side of his adversary's. There was a considerable difference, however; the English blade was not so long as the German by at least two inches; and when the Baron observed it, his cheek flushed and his brow contracted; but his heart was noble and just, though somewhat impetuous and fierce; and, after a moment's pause, he said; "I cannot fight you with this disparity; we must put it off till another day. It is my fault, too; I should have sent you the measure of my weapon, or asked the length of yours."

"It matters not," answered the young Englishman; "your sword is a little longer than

mine; but my arm is somewhat longer than yours; thus the difference is made up; and nothing of this kind should ever be put off for slight punctilios. Besides, my stay in this country must be short; and I may not have another opportunity of gratifying you. With thanks, then, for your courtesy, I say we must go forward as the matter is."

"Well, well," answered Obertraut; "if such is your opinion, I am ready."

"We had better move the cloaks out of the way," answered Algernon Grey; "I see the light will not fail us."

"Oh, no fear of that," said the Baron; "these things do not take long."

The young Englishman smiled; and, the field having been cleared, advanced, with ceremonious courtesy, and saluted his adversary. Obertraut returned the compliment; and their swords then crossed.

The great school for the use of that weapon with which both gentlemen were now armed, was, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the low, fallen land of Italy, where Algernon Grey had passed several years. In point of strength, the two adversaries were very equally matched: for, though the young Englishman was somewhat taller and more supple, yet Obertraut was several years older, and had acquired that firmness and vigor of muscle, which is obtained long enough before any portion of activity is lost. The latter was also very skilful in the use of his arms; but here Algernon Grey, from the schools in which he had studied, was undoubtedly superior. He was also superior in perfect coolness. There was no angry passion in his breast, no haste, no impetuosity. He came there to defend himself, to oppose an adversary, but neither eager nor fearful. He felt as if he were in a hall of arms with baited weapons, merely trying his skill. He was anxious to disarm his opponent, not to hurt him; and in the first three passes Obertraut was taught that he was pitted against a complete master of the rapier. At first this discovery served to make him more cautious; and he used all his skill; but it was all in vain. He could not approach his adversary's breast; wherever his point turned, the blade of Algernon Grey met it; and more than once the Baron felt that he had laid himself open to the riposte, but that, from some cause, his adversary had not seized the opportunity. Repeated disappointments, however, rendered him irritable and incautious. He watched, indeed, his opponent's defence, thinking to learn what he called the trick, and overcome it by another sort of attack; but whenever he changed his mode, Algernon met it with a different parry; and the clashing sword passed innocuous by his shoulder or his hip.

The light began to wane perceptibly, and, as cool and perhaps cooler than when he began, the young Englishman recollected his adversary's words, and thought, "These things take longer than you imagined, my good friend, with a man, who knows what he is about."

A slight smile curled his lip, at the same time; and thinking that he was mocking him, Obertraut renewed the attack with tenfold fury. Algernon Grey gave a momentary glance to the sky; the rose had died away from above;

heavy clouds were driving over in detached masses; a drop of rain fell upon his hand; and he saw that, in two or three minutes, the air would become quite dark.

"I must wound him," said he to himself, "or in this dull twilight I shall get hurt; he is too keen to be disarmed; I must wound him, but slightly."

At the same moment Obertraut made a furious pass; the young Englishman parried the lunge, but, though his adversary's breast was left unguarded, his heart smote him, and he would not return it, lest he should touch some vital part. The Baron pressed him close with pass after pass; and step by step the young Englishman retreated. Then suddenly changing his mode, Algernon assumed the attack, drove his adversary before him in good guard, and then, in the Italian manner, took a bound back and stood in defence. Obertraut, following the method, of which he had some knowledge, sprang forward and lunged. Algernon parried and returned; but at the same moment the Baron's foot slipped on the wet grass, the sword's point caught him on the right breast close to the collar-bone, and passed out behind the shoulder. He staggered up, raised his weapon, let it fall, and sank slowly on the ground.

However cool and self-possessed a man may be—though he may think himself fully justified in what he has done, though he may have been acting in self-defence, though the act may have been inevitable—yet no one can inflict a real and serious injury upon another without feeling a certain degree of regret, if not remorse, unless his heart be as adamant. It is at such moments that the strange link of consanguinity which binds the whole human race together is first known to us; it is then that we feel we are brothers, and that we have raised a hand against a brother's life.

The moment that the deed was done—and it was evidently more than he had intended to do—Algernon Grey felt a pang shoot through his heart, and he said internally: "Would that he had not driven me to it, would that he had not provoked it!" but, casting down his sword at once, he knelt by Obertraut's side, and, raising his head and shoulders on his knee, exclaimed in kindly and eager tones: "I hope you are not much hurt!"

"A little faint," said Obertraut, slowly; "not much—I shall be better presently, and able to go on."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" exclaimed Algernon Grey, vehemently, "to go on in combat against a man with whom you have no quarrel, who has never injured, insulted, or offended you, who was friendly disposed towards you! My good friend, I will draw the sword against you no more; I have had enough of it."

"Methinks, so have I," said Obertraut, faintly, with a light smile passing over his face. "You are a master of the science;—that pass was splendid."

"It was the turf!" cried Algernon Grey; "had you not slipped, I should have hardly touched you."

Obertraut pressed his hand, saying, "If you could stop the bleeding—it is soaking through all my doublet;—you had better call the surgeon."

"I will try to staunch the blood first," answered Algernon Grey; "no time is to be lost—five minutes more and we shall not see the wound;" and, opening the vest and shirt of his opponent, which were now both drenched in blood, he tore his handkerchief in two, making each half into a sort of compress, as he had often before seen the surgeons do, when hurried on the field of battle. He fixed one on the wound before, the other on the aperture behind the shoulder, and with the Baron's scarf and his own, bound them tightly down, stopping the flow of blood, at least in a degree. Then, after gazing at him for a moment or two, he said, "I will leave you only during an instant, and send the page for a litter or something to bear you to the town."

"No, no," answered his former adversary; "send up to the Stift Neuburg, they will take me in and tend me well. Then a surgeon can be brought;—but remember, whatever happens, this is not your fault; it was my own seeking—my own doing,—no one is to be blamed but myself. Methinks the bleeding has stopped."

Algernon Grey hurried away, found the path without difficulty, and ran down towards the road; but the moment his own page saw him coming, he threw the reins of the horses to the other, and sprang to meet his master, exclaiming, "Away, my lord, away, or you will not be able to pass. The river is rising rapidly; the water is already upon the road."

"Mind not me," exclaimed Algernon Grey, "but hasten with all speed up to the building there upon the left. Fly, boy, fly! and give notice that there is a gentleman lying wounded in the wood. Beg the people to send down bearers instantly to carry him up thither."

The boy gazed at him with a look of surprise and consternation, and seemed about to ask some question, when Algernon Grey exclaimed, "Away! inquire nothing; his life depends upon your speed."

The page instantly darted off to execute the commission, when suddenly a sound was heard as of the feet of many horses coming at a rapid pace round the wood and the rocks beyond. The boy paused and drew back for an instant; and a part of the splendid train of the Elector and his Princess swept along, with their horses' hoofs splashing in the water, which was now two or three inches deep on that part of the road. The boy then ran on, and Algernon Grey advanced a step or two to catch some stragglers of the party and bid them send a surgeon quickly from the town; but, ere he reached the broad road, two or three cavaliers dashed past like lightning, without noticing him; and the next instant a shrill piercing shriek broke upon his ear.

CHAPTER IX.

THE court of the Elector, Frederic the Fifth, was, as I have in some degree shown, one of the gayest as well as one of the most splendid in Europe. Nay, the merriment and revelry that reigned therein, puzzled the stern Calvinistic ministers not a little, how to excuse a degree of levity in the Prince and Princess, which they undoubtedly thought most unbecom-

coming in the heads of the severe Puritanical party in Germany. They would have censured and interfered, beyond all doubt, if they had dared; but the ministers of a sect whose religious teachers have little real power beyond that which the fanaticism of their disciples affords, are rather apt to grow sycophantic in the case of great personages, whose countenance and protection are necessary to the support of their authority, if not to their existence. It thus happened, that Scultetus and his brethren, as the good man's own writings show, were exceedingly lenient to the amiable lightness of the Elector, and contented themselves with very severe and menacing sermons before the court, while they seized every opportunity of apologizing for the gaiety of the prince and his consort, on the score of youth, prosperity, and habit.

Thus day after day, some new party of pleasure, some sport, some revel—interrupted only by occasional wild bursts of fanaticism, which had their interest and excitement also—kept up the thoughtless spirits of the court of the Palatinate, and sometimes afforded opportunity for pursuits not quite so innocent.

On the evening of which we have just been speaking, a large party, though somewhat less in number than that of the preceding day, issued forth from the gates of the castle, crossed the bridge, and took its way along the same road which was afterwards pursued by Algernon Grey and the Baron of Oberntraut. I will not pause to describe the amusements of the afternoon, nor to tell how the cavalcade was led through paths and by-ways which had seldom been sought so gay before. Schönau, which they had visited on the preceding day, was merely passed through, to the renewed admiration of the good peasants; and then, by a narrow road, which naturally separated the party into pairs, the glittering troop reached a little village with a curious contradictory name, called Alt Neuburg, or Old New Town. The look of the village seemed somewhat desolate to the eyes even of the fair Electress, who was naturally inclined to any wild expedition; but the whole party were soon agreeably surprised to find a house and garden in the midst of the place, decked out with flags and banners and pieces of tapestry, as if for their reception, while well known servants of the court appeared at the doors, in quaint dresses, to receive the princely personages, and a rich collation of cold meats, fine wines, and fruits, was spread in a large room hung like a royal tent and carpeted with dry moss.

During the ride thither, William Lovet had maintained his place by the side of the fair Countess of Laussitz; but he seemed in a less cheerful and amiable humour than the day before; and directing her eyes by his own towards the person of a lady who rode near, he said, as they approached the village:—

"You told me she would not be here."

"Why what difference does her presence or absence make to you, servant!" asked the countess; "do you hate her so that you cannot bear her sight? You are as dull and sullen as if you had been crossed in love by her."

Lovet saw that he had shown his ill-humour too far, and replied, with a more smiling air,

"I thought women were better politicians. Beauty. Can you not divine why I am vexed? It is not that I am displeased to have her here, but not to have her somewhere else. On my good cousin's stay in this country depends my own by your fair side; for I have sworn to keep him company for a year. If he goes I must go, and how could I live without you for twelve months!"

"But what has that to do with Agnes Herbert?" asked the lady.

"What! were those bright eyes only made to pierce my heart and not to see?" cried Lovet. "Have you not perceived that love caught him by the hand that very first night; and now he is struggling to free himself. Had she remained behind, he would have seen her, as he did last night; and another link would have been added to the chain which keeps him here, and me at your small feet. You must help me, bright one, to rivet this young girl's chain around his neck. I, too, must find a moment during our ride to-day to prompt her, even at the loss of some part of my sunshine."

In the train of the Elector there were more persons than William Lovet not altogether contented with the events of the day. Critical moments were approaching, when decision was necessary, and when each decision, even upon a small and apparently trifling point, might influence the destinies not only of the Palatinate, but of the whole of Germany; and, more remotely, of the whole world. There were some men at the court of the Elector who took this wider and more comprehensive view, and were anxious to see all his acts well weighed, and his whole thoughts directed to the consideration of questions so great in magnitude. At the same time there were others of a narrower scope, who were anxious to fix his opinions in favour of that party to which they belonged, or of that particular course which their party advocated. The levity and revelry of the court, of course, interfered with the purposes of each; and, on the present occasion, two or three of the young sovereign's counsellors, frustrated in former efforts to obtain his ear, had followed the cavalcade in the hope that some opportunity would occur of enforcing each his separate opinion. The two most influential persons present, as politicians, were the celebrated Louis Camerarius and the Viscount Achates de Dohna, lately the Electoral Ambassador at Prague.* Very different, indeed, were the two men, and very different their views; but, without attempting to paint the characters of each, it may only be necessary to say that, upon this occasion, Camerarius sought eagerly to keep the ear of the Elector entirely to himself, filling it with flattering prospects of greatness to come; while Dohna only endeavored, from time to time, to place before the eyes of his master, by a few brief words, the dangers and difficulties of an undertaking, to which his more flattering or more interested courtiers were hurrying him too eagerly forward.

It was not till the collation was over, nor even till the party had passed through the small village of Ziegelhausen, that either the one or

the other found any opportunity of advancing his particular notions. Then, however, on the narrow way, which varied in width at different places, the Elector rode a few steps in advance, calling Camerarius to his side; while the Princess Elizabeth, with some ladies and gentlemen, followed, having Dohna on her left hand, between her and the river. The pace at which they proceeded was at first slow; and the wind, as I have said, blew strong up the turbulent stream. Thus, when the prince and his counsellor raised their voices, the sound was distinctly carried to the party behind. Once or twice, just as they quitted Ziegelhausen, the horse of Dohna was seen to prance and curvet, as if either it or its rider had become suddenly impatient; and at length the voice of Camerarius was heard by the whole group round the Princess, saying, "They cannot pretend that your Highness had any hand in it. The whole affair is of Bohemian manufacture."

Dohna struck his horse sharply with the spur, was in an instant by the prince's side, and answered aloud, "So is the gold chain round your neck, Counsellor Camerarius."

Then, reining in his horse, he fell back to the side of the Electress, leaving Camerarius a little confused. The latter was too old a courtier, however, to suffer his anger and shame to be apparent; and merely saying, "The viscount seems angry this evening," he went on with his flowery discourse.

"Should such a choice be made," he said, "it can but be looked upon as the call of Heaven. That a mixed population of different creeds and sentiments should unite in placing on their throne a prince, not only strong by his own power and his high qualities, but who is also the head and main stay of the great Protestant Union of Germany, must be the result of some supreme directing power, superior to the mere wisdom of man."

Dohna was at the prince's side again in an instant. "How long will the Union last united?" he said; "has it ever been united? Has it ever acted in harmony? Throw that out of the calculation, except as an element of discord."

Camerarius gave him a furious look, the Elector was silent, and Dohna let them again pass on, resuming his conversation with the Electress.

The next words that were heard were from the mouth of Frederic; though several sentences had been spoken in the mean while, which did not reach the ears of those behind.

"They are, indeed, a determined race," he said; "ready to shed their best blood, rather than submit to the tyranny of the Roman church."

"They have shown themselves, for ages, your Highness," answered Camerarius, "resolute and vigorous in support of any cause they undertake."

Dohna spurred forward again: "I know them better than any one," he exclaimed, "and I will not conceal that, though they are headstrong and obstinate, fierce and passionate, they are ready to abandon any leader on the first grievance, and refuse him all vigorous support, unless he square his conscience to their prejudices."

* By some historians he is called Baron de Dohna.

This time he did not seem disposed to withdraw; for the road was wider; and Camerarius, trusting he had produced some effect, was unwilling to pursue the subject farther, in the presence of such an opponent. They were now passing the Stift Neuburg, and, casting his eyes forward, he exclaimed, "We had better hurry our pace, my lord; the water there seems rising rapidly over the road."

"Quick, quick!" cried Frederic, shouting to those behind; "spur on, or we shall be cut off by the river."

A couple of hundred yards farther, the road was found covered with the water; and the Elector suddenly drew in his horse with an air of hesitation.

"Is that the spirit to win, or keep a crown?" murmured Dohna to himself; and, striking his spurs into his horse's side, he exclaimed aloud, "This way, your Highness, this way! I will show you the path. The water is not two inches deep;" and, riding hastily on, he soon reached a spot where the causeway rose again above the level to which the river had risen. Those who were immediately behind, followed at once; and, though the whole of the electoral party had separated into distinct groups, another and another passed without fear or danger.

We must turn, however, here, to the last personages of the cavalcade, and follow them from Ziegelhausen.

In that village Agnes Herbert had lingered behind; for her horse had fallen lame; and she had called one of the attendants of the court to examine the beast's foot, when she suddenly found an English gentleman, William Lovet, by her side. As soon as he perceived what was the matter, he sprang to the ground, and before the attendant could interfere, had examined the horse's hoof, and extracted a stone which had fixed itself firmly between the frog and the shoe; then remounting, with a bound, he said, with a graceful inclination of the head, "That is soon remedied. He will go well now; but do not hurry him."

Agnes went on; and Lovet kept close to her side, saying, "I am mistaken, or I have had the honour of seeing you before. My noble cousin Algernon was your prisoner during a night of sweet captivity."

Agnes bowed her head, answering, "I was obliged to obey the electress, even in a jest."

"I will not tell him," replied William Lovet, smiling, "that you consented only from duty."

"His demeanor made the duty a pleasure," answered Agnes.

"Ah, well may you say so," said Lovet, looking down thoughtfully; "he is a great winner of good opinions. Most men gain upon others by concealing all that is evil within them, Algernon by showing all that is in his heart, having nothing that is not noble to conceal;" and then, merely to break the discourse for a time, he pointed down the valley, saying, "What a beautiful scene is this! I know not whether it be more splendid, as when I saw it first, sleeping calmly in the evening sunshine, with the Neckar as placid and clear as a lake, or now, with yon red and stormy sky fading away into the night, and the tempestuous waters of the river below, foaming and fretting among the rocks and shallows."

"The Neckar is terribly swollen," replied the fair girl; "I never recollect to have seen it such a torrent, except in winter;" and, gazing down the dark mass of rushing waters, all turbid and confused, whirling in eddies near, and dashing fiercely over the dark rock beyond, a feeling almost of awe crept over her.

"It is very fine, indeed," rejoined Lovet; "and I can appreciate it better now than I could some time ago; for the society of my cousin has taught me to look upon the beauties of nature with a different and more marking eye than heretofore. There seems a grand harmony between his heart and everything that is lovely—except, indeed," he added, "the loveliness of your sex, fair lady; for I never knew him, that I remember, bestow ten words, even upon the fairest of them, in my life."

Agnes thought—"He has bestowed more on me;" but she did not reply: and William Lovet continued,

"Not that he is a woman-hater," he said, "for he is courteous and kind to all; but, on the contrary, I believe he has formed so high an estimate of woman's excellence, that he never finds his fancy fulfilled."

"If excellence is like other rare things," answered Agnes, "methinks it would take more than ten words to draw it forth."

"Ay, but he is very quick in his judgment," said her companion. "He, like many another man, imagines that nature has written much upon the countenance, that she tells him much in the voice and manner; and that, unless both be well tutored by long experience, a keen observer will read the book aright, and know much of the contents from the first page. I have seldom known him wrong, I must confess."

"Such keen-sightedness may, perchance, be a dangerous quality," the lady replied; "I mean, even for his own peace."

"Oh, no, he is ever on his guard," replied Lovet, in a frank tone; "he never spends any time on one whom he does not think worthy of esteem; but, with a courteous nothing, some filigree words of *à-tu-pas* commonplace, meant to cover very little reverence, retires into himself again."

Agnes ran rapidly over in her own mind all that had passed between her and Algernon Grey, and asked herself, "Has he done so with me?" The answer was evident; and she would fain have fallen into thought; but she did not wish to show, or to admit even to herself, that the matter was one worthy of much meditation; and she inquired almost immediately, "Does he deal thus with men?"

"Oh dear, no," answered Lovet; "there, knowing that he is safe, all the fine fancies of his mind, and all the generous feelings of his heart, become apparent. It were worth your while to overhear him pour forth, in words of impassioned eloquence, sentiments that are worthy of a better age than ours. You would find him a very different being from what he has seemed. You must not think him, indeed, a cold and formal egotist, wrapped up in the contemplation of his own fancied excellence. I know, with women, this is often his character, though his person and his manners have great captivation for them too."

Agnes replied not; but looked forward on the road before, saying, "It is growing very dark, we had better ride on faster. My horse goes easily now;" and, shaking the rein, she put her jennet into a quick canter. In a moment after, a boy, dressed as a page, ran out from the wood, and, catching the rein of Lovet's horse, exclaimed, "Oh, sir, help here; there is a gentleman badly hurt—dying, I am afraid."

"Is it your master?" demanded Lovet, reining in his horse; while Agnes paused, listening with eager ears beside him.

"No, no," answered the boy; "it is the other gentleman."

"Then the other gentleman must take care of himself," answered Lovet. "Let go the rein, boy," he continued, in a sharp tone; "the stream is rising fast. Come on, come on, fair lady, or in this increasing darkness we shall get into mischief—come on, come on!" and he dashed forward along the path.

Agnes paused for an instant, and then exclaimed, "Run up to that large building, my good boy; they will give you speedy help."

Then, seeing the danger of farther delay, she struck the jennet with the whip, and the beast darted on through the water upon the path. Lovet was now some thirty or forty yards in advance, and she saw his horse swerve away from some object in the wood near the boat-house. He kept him steady with the spur, however; and Agnes, as she came to the same spot, turned her head to see what had alarmed the beast. She just caught sight of some horses and a page gathered together in an opening of the road; but, at that moment, her jennet shied violently away at the unexpected sight. She tried to keep his head forward with the rein, but the beast reared and struggled against it; his feet passed the limit of the road; and, in a moment, horse and rider plunged over into the midst of the rushing stream.

A loud and piercing shriek rang upon the air; Lovet turned his head and looked. Then, muttering between his teeth, "Ha! we must find another," he dashed on till he reached a spot where the road was free of water.

At the same moment, however, that the heartless exclamation passed his lips, the tall, powerful form of Algernon Grey appeared from the wood. The young cavalier cast a rapid glance over the dark and foaming surface of the stream. He saw a horse's head and neck rise above the water, and a woman's form, still keeping the seat, but evidently with a great effort, holding fast by the mane and the saddle. Another loud scream met his ear, and, with the rapid calculation of a quick, clear mind, he darted to the spot where the rude barks were moored, sprang into the first he could reach, cast it loose, and, with a vigorous effort, pushed it forth into the stream.

In the mean time, the horse, with the instinct of self-preservation, turned itself in the struggling waters, and endeavoured to breast the current, striking violently with his fore feet to keep its head above the torrent, and rolling fearfully under its fair burden. Agnes still clung to it, uttering shriek after shriek; but, whirled round by the eddies, in spite of all its

efforts the animal was carried further down. A black looking rock still raised its round head partly above the waves; and as they were carried near, though the strength both of rider and beast was failing, the poor animal, by a violent effort, got its fore feet upon the rock, straining to clamber up. The attempt was fatal to the jennet: the water by the side was deep: there was no hold for its hind feet: the fore feet slipped; and back it rolled into the overwhelming torrent.

With heart failing and strength gone, Agnes loosed her hold and addressed one brief prayer to Heaven. But at that moment, a strong arm was thrown round her, and she felt herself dragged out of the water into something which yielded and swayed under the pressure of her weight. She saw the struggling agonies of the horse; she saw a human figure, and a boat half sinking with the water which had poured into it as it heeled in receiving her; and then, with her brain whirling and her heart sick, she closed her eyes and pressed her fingers upon them.

At the same moment a hand grasped hers warmly, and a voice she knew, said: "You are safe, you are safe! God's name be praised!"

CHAPTER X.

AGNES HERBERT left her hand in that of her deliverer. For more than a minute she made no reply; she asked no question. The voice was enough; she knew who it was that had saved her. But she knew not as yet the perils which still hung over both him and her. At length he let go her hand; and she heard a noise in the frail skiff, which made her instantly open her eyes. Then it was she perceived the full danger of their actual situation. Even in the grey twilight she could see that the edge of the small boat was within an inch of the surface of the boiling stream, that the bark itself was half full of water, while Algernon Grey was busily employed in baling it out with his hands, as the only means he had of freeing it even in a degree.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," she cried; "for how much have I to be grateful!"

"Speak not of that, sweet lady," answered the young Englishman; "but for pity's sake, watch every thing with a keen eye as we are carried down the stream; for I cannot—dare not even attempt to reach the land. Tell me the moment you perceive a rock; for, with all this water in the boat, the least touch would sink us."

"Here, take my velvet cap," cried Agnes, "it is better than nothing;" but, ere Algernon Grey could use it twice to bale out a part of the water, his fair companion cried: "A rock, a rock!—There, on the right!" and Algernon, rising cautiously, took the short pole, which was the only implement the boat contained, and watched eagerly in the bow, till they neared a spot where one of the rude masses of granite still held its head above the current, which dashed and whirled around it. Then lightly touching it with the pole, he kept the boat off in deeper water; and in another instant, scarcely able to keep his feet, found him-

self whirled round in the vortex, formed by the impeded torrent the moment it was free.

Oh, what a terrible period was the passage down that stream. At each instant some new danger beset them—now the rocks—now the shallows—now the rapids—now the eddies: no means of approaching the shore; and reasonable doubts, that any effort to do so would not lead to immediate destruction! The sky became darker and darker every moment; and, though by the aid of Agnes, afforded to the best of her power, a considerable portion of the water in the bark was cast back into the stream, still the fragile lightness of the skiff, and the depth to which it had sunk, rendered it little probable that those it contained would ever reach the land in safety. The close falling night, the roaring of the torrent, the howling of the wind blowing strong against them, the agitated surface of the stream, now tossing them to and fro, now whirling them round and round, might well have daunted a strong heart inured to peril, much more that of Agnes Herbert. Algernon Grey felt for her terror, as well as for her danger; and ever and anon he said: "Let us trust in God, dear lady!—Fear not, fear not! There is a stronger arm than mine to protect you.—It is now that faith in Heaven is a comfort indeed."

But still, with eager eye, and steady nerve, and skilful hand, he watched and guided, as well as he could, the boat along the troubled surface of the river.

Night fell; not a star was to be seen; the clouds swept thick and dark over the sky; but still, from time to time, a momentary light was afforded by a broad sheet of summer lightning, which for an instant cast a blue glare through the valley of the Neckar. The mountains were seen and lost; the rocks, the trees, the woods stood out and disappeared like phantoms in a dream; and at length, walls and towers became, for one brief moment, visible; and then all was black again.

"We must be near the bridge," said Agnes; "do you not hear the water rushing more fiercely! Heaven help us now! for, if we strike against the piers, we are lost."

"Sit quiet there," answered Algernon; "I will go into the bow; and be assured, dear lady, I will live or die with you. Only remember, if I am forced to swim, lie quiet on my arm; for, if you clasp me, we both sink."

"I will not stir," she said, in a firm tone; and Algernon Grey went carefully forward.

He heard the roar of the river, evidently dashing in fury against some obstruction; and then he thought he caught the tones of human voices speaking above. Then came a broad sheet of lightning; and he saw the bridge, with its manifold arches and its towered gates close at hand. He had but time to stretch forth his arm, and, with a violent effort, keep the boat from the pier, when it shot in fury through the vault, and issued forth at the other side.

"We have to thank God again," he said, regaining his balance, which he had nearly lost; "that danger is passed; and, if I remember right, the stream is clearer below."

"Much, much," said Agnes. "The rocks cease as soon as the mountains fall away; but there are many sand-banks."

"We must watch still," replied her companion, "but the stream seems already less rapid."

The fearful rushing sound of the swollen Neckar diminished shortly after they had passed the bridge. They could even hear, or fancied that they heard, the hum of human voices from within the town. Lights were seen in various windows, and cheerful images of happy life came thick before their eyes, as they were hurried on, along the course of that dark headlong stream, with many a peril still before them.

"That must be the boat-house at Neunheim," said Agnes, at length, after a long silent pause; "they have got a fire there, though the night is so sultry."

"They must be caulking their boats, I think," replied Algernon; "and from the distance of the fire I should judge we are in the mid-stream. I will call to them as we pass—perchance they may hear and help us."

A moment or two after he raised his voice and shouted aloud; but no one answered—no form darkened the light in the hut, as if one of the inhabitants had come out to see who called. Rapidly the boat hurried past, and all was silence. The river was less turbulent, but seemed hardly less swift; the noise subsided to a low whispering murmur, and the tide poured through the widening banks; and faintly marked objects—willow, and shrub, and decayed oak, which were hardly distinguishable from the banks or the sky—seemed to move away with the speed of lightning.

At the end of about half an hour, during which the two had not raised their voices above a whisper, Agnes said aloud, "There is a star! There is a star! The sky must be clearing. Do you not think it is lighter already?"

"Assuredly, dear lady," replied Algernon Grey, "the moon must soon rise; last night she was up by this time. See, there is a glow upon the clouds round what seems a hill-top there to the right."

"It is the Heiligberg," answered Agnes. "I have seen a gleam like that when the moon was coming up in the east. Oh! Heaven send that she may disperse the clouds and give us light."

Algernon Grey turned his eyes to the light, and he found cause to hope. The clouds were breaking fast; the stars gleamed faintly out here and there; and the edges of the vapoury fragments looked white and fleecy. Agnes gazed in the same direction; and for five minutes both were silent. Then the boat grated heavily with a sudden shock, and stood fast in the midst of the stream. The two voyagers were nearly thrown down by the concussion, but Algernon exclaimed, "Fear not! fear not! We are on a bank, but no harm can happen; the water must be very shallow here. Let us sit calm till the moon rises; she must be even now just behind those hills. It is growing lighter every moment."

He was right in his judgment; and in less than ten minutes the sky was clear or nearly clear of clouds. The moon, indeed, could not yet be seen; but her pale silvery light spread over the whole heavens; and everything around, to the eye so long accustomed to utter darkness, appeared to stand out as if in the broad

beams of day. Upon the left, the bank seemed somewhat steep and rugged, and no landing-place could be discerned; but to the right was a piece of low sedge ground, which the young Englishman doubted not was partially overflowed by the swollen stream.

"Do you know where we are, dear lady?" he asked; "I can see neither house nor village."

"I cannot tell," answered Agnes. "I should think we must have passed Edingen by the time which has elapsed. Do you not think we could reach the land? Oh, let us try; for wherever it is, we shall be better there than on the bosom of this dreadful river."

Algernon Grey smiled upon her with that warm heart-springing look we only can give to those we have cherished or protected. "It is only dreadful now, this same fair Neckar," he said, "because we came too near it in an angry mood. To-morrow it will be as calm and sweet as yesterday."

"And would be so," answered Agnes, "if it flowed over our graves. It will ever be dreadful to me, from this night forth."

"Not so to me," replied her companion, "for it has afforded me a great happiness. But I will try to push the boat off the bank and guide it to yonder low ground on the right. Little will do it, if we can once get afloat again."

His efforts were not in vain, though it required all his strength to force the little skiff from the firm hed into which the rapid current of the stream had carried it. As soon as it was free, however, he perceived an increase of the water in the bark; and, judging rightly, that the sudden shock upon the shoal had seriously damaged it, he saw that not an instant was to be lost. Reasting the end of the pole upon the sand-bank, as the boat swung round, he gave it a vehement impulse towards the shore. It drifted on with the current, but took an oblique direction, which Algernon Grey aided, using the boat-pole as a feeble sort of rudder; but still the river was deep and swift, the bank some yards distant, and the water in the bark gaining fast.

"The boat seems sinking," said Agnes, in a low, sad tone.

"Fear not! fear not!" replied her companion, cheerfully; "in a quiet stream, such as this is here, I could swim with you three times across without risk. But we are nearing the bank!" and, sounding the water with the pole, he found the bed of the river, and pushed the boat to shore just as she was settling down.

It was a low swampy piece of ground that they touched, covered with long sedge and bulrushes growing upon overflowed land. Algernon Grey sprang out at once, and finding water still up to his knees, he leaned over into the boat, and took his sweet companion in his arms.

"I must carry you for a little way," he said, "and now we may, indeed, thank God with our whole heart for a great deliverance. You shall walk as soon as we reach dry ground, dear lady, for you are wet, and I fear must be cold."

"Oh, no," she answered, "either terror or the sultry air has kept me warm enough. But

how can I ever thank you for all you have done."

She lay on his arm; her heart beat against his; her breath fanned his cheek when she spoke. What were the feelings of Algernon Grey at that moment? He would not ask himself; and he was wise. He gave up his whole thoughts to her, to cheer, to soothe, to protect her; to remove from her mind not only the impression of the past peril, but also all feeling of the embarrassment and difficulty of her actual situation, left to wander, neither well knew whither, with a man, a young man whom she had known but a few days, in the darkness and solitude of night.

He felt his load light and his burden a pleasant one, it is true, as he bore her on for more than a hundred yards through the marsh. He would have willingly had her lie there far longer—perhaps for life; but still as soon as they came upon the dry sandy ground, he set her gently down and drew her arm through his.

"Now, sweet comrade," he said, gaily, "we must fight our way to some village where you can find rest for the night. Do you not feel weary? Terror is a sad sapper of human strength."

"Not so tired, perhaps, as I might expect to be," answered Agnes, "considering that I had a long ride before this terrible event took place. Alas, my poor jennet, that bore me so often and so well, I shall never see you more! Yet I am wrong to speak so: my whole thoughts should be gratitude."

"We have both much cause for thankfulness," replied Algernon, "and see, dear lady, the beautiful moon, to guide us on our way, is rising over the hill, half hidden by the woods, half seen through the tree tops. How quickly she wanders on along her blue way. But we must take a lesson from her, and speed forward likewise. What path shall I choose? for I have no knowledge of this land."

"And I very little of this part," said the lady; "but one thing is clear; by bending our course towards the hills again, we shall at all events approach the town."

"That must be far," answered her companion, "and those small limbs of yours will hardly bear you thither to-night; but let us to the right at all events; as likely to find a resting-place there as on any other path;" and bidding her rest upon his arm for support, he led her on.

Theirs was a strange ramble through the wide fields and plains that stretch out between the foot of the Bergstrasse and the Rhine; and yet not without deep interest to both. Each had at heart feelings of many a varied character sufficient to fill up long hours of dull life, and each was disinclined to dwell upon the most thrilling emotions of all; but yet, however they might fly to other subjects, how anxiously soever they might strive to withhold their thoughts from anything that might agitate or overpower—still those emotions presented themselves in vague and indistinct forms, mingling with thought, seizing hold upon fancy, and giving a tone and colour to all that was said, without either of them being aware that they deviated from the ordinary course of conversation between persons of their birth and

station. The scene, too, and the season, the hour, the atmosphere, the circumstances, the events that had lately taken place, the prospects of the future in their very indefinite obscurity, all had an influence, and seemed to combine to nourish a growing passion in their hearts. The moon rose bright from behind the trees upon the mountain tops, shining like the bright pure vision of young and innocent love. The clouds, which at the outset of their stormy and perilous course had swept like the evils of life over the whole sky, had now vanished as if by magic, leaving but here and there a fragment whirling upon the wind, to obscure the twinkling stars with its light veil. In the south-west, some half way up the heaven, shone a lustrous planet, beaming calm, steadfast, serene, like the undying light of hope; and, while opposite stretched in grand masses the hill-slopes of the Bergstrasse, beneath that star appeared the wavy outline of the Haardt mountains, still coloured with a purple hue, as if the rays of the departed sun had not yet entirely left them. Above, and to the south and east, all was bright and silvery with the light of the risen moon. The stars themselves were there extinguished in the flood of splendour; but on the borders of the sky the twinkly lights of night looked out, like gems on the robe of their queen; and, from time to time, a bright meteor crossed the expanse, hurrying from space, and dying ere it reached the earth, like the light thoughts of many a great mind, which perish in the brain that gives them birth.

The air was warm, and yet stirred by a strong breeze. There was a certain languor in it, a love-like, luxurious softness, disposing to gentle thoughtfulness; and a sweet perfume rose up from some of the shrubs of the field, mingling harmoniously with that bland air, and rendering its softening powers still greater. Over the wide plain which they traversed, the moon's beams fell bright, but not clear; for a thin vapour, too light to obstruct the view, and only serving to diffuse and generalize the light, rose up from the drenched fields in the warm air.

Rescued from death, and brought safely through innumerable perils by him on whose arm she leaned, the heart of Agnes Herbert might well dwell fondly on the thought of one whose words, whose manners, and whose look had before captivated her fancy, if not touched her heart. All the terrors she had felt, all the dangers she had passed, all the services he had rendered, all the kindness and tenderness he had shown that night, mingled strangely in memory with the words and the conduct of the two preceding evenings, with the interest she had previously felt in him, and with the account given of him by his companion and friend. But she, like himself, would not pause to think of such things—at least she would not scan them; and gladly she joined in conversation upon any topic, which would lead her mind away from that on which it lingered.

Many and varied, too, were the subjects with which he strove to entertain her, to wile her mind away from the thoughts of her situation, and to lighten the minutes of their long and devious course, as they wandered on in search of some human habitation.

"How bright the night has become," said Algernon Grey, after a pause. "Thus very often, when we least expect it, the storms that hang over some part of every man's career are wafted away, and all is clear again."

"And but the brighter for the storm," said Agnes.

"Ay," he rejoined, "I fear me much, sweet lady, that we should never enjoy the sunshine but for the shade. It is in the varieties of creation and the constant changes of the world's life, that the grand harmony of the whole consists. Let the tone of an instrument be ever so sweet, what effect would it produce upon the ear, if it had but one note? How poor is a concert with but two or three instruments! But in the succession and combination of many notes and many tones, how grand, how beautiful is the melodious harmony! Skies ever blue, and pastures ever green," he continued, changing to a gayer tone, "would, I believe, become very dull and wearisome, notwithstanding all the verities of pastoral poets."

"So men think, I have been told," answered Agnes; "and that they choose their wives of tempers that may give them some variety."

"Yes, but there may be pleasant varieties, too," answered Algernon Grey, "even in one character. The storm is, in itself, a grand thing; but no man, methinks, would unroof his house to let it in; and, besides, dear lady, all things have their fitness. The drums and trumpets of an army are fine enough, mellowed by the open air; but who would think of enjoying a full choir thereof in a narrow room? After all," he continued, "in most classes of society this same marriage may be called a matter of fate rather than of choice, arranged by friends, or fixed by circumstances. Man little knows how rarely in life he is a free agent, and, above all, how rarely in this respect. Then again," he continued, "even when man or woman is truly said to make a choice, do they ever know that which they choose? We walk about with vizards, my sweet friend; ay, even up to the steps of the altar; and the real face is seldom seen till the ring is on the finger."

He spoke very seriously; but Agnes replied with a laugh: "Perhaps if it were not so, no one would marry at all; and yet," she added, in a graver tone, "if I thought I did wear one of these same masks, I would never rest till I had torn it off; for I would much rather never be loved than lose the love I had obtained."

"A far happier fate!" answered Algernon Grey; and then changing the subject suddenly, he said, "How is it our discourse ever gets so grave? With this fair scene around us, and such a joyful escape as we have both had, methinks we ought both to be more gay. It was but the nightingale's song to make this moon-light night complete in beauty."

"Ah! but the dear nightingale," answered the lady, "is penurious of his melody here; and in the month of June, or, at the latest, this last month, all his sweet notes come to an end. I know not why; for the people give the nightingale another flower; but, in my mind, he is always associated with the violet. His song is so sweet, so tranquil, so fragrant I may call it, so unlike the gay and perfumed rose, the

of summer sunshine, whose blushing seems to court the gaze he shrinks from; can never fancy he would love the rose; the calm violet, pouring forth her sweet in the shade, is his true image."

She spoke, a distant light seemed to rise on the plain; but in a different direction that in which their steps were bent; he paused for a moment to remark it. "It moves, it moves," said Algernon Grey; "out an ignis-fatuus. How many of them are in this world. Each man of us, I believe his own, which he follows blindly. Here, ambition there, avarice elsewhere, a thirst of worldly honours, the gewgaws of pomp and estate, the miserable light of fanaticism, the dull foul lamp of superstition, are all so many Will-o'-the-wisps; we ever from the broad, straightforward path. So will not we, fair lady; but by your leave, go upon this path, which will consume somewhere. Here are tracks of wheels, with the moonlight glistening on the wet pavement, the storm has left—but your step seems to follow the path."

"Do I go too fast?" she asked. "No," she answered; "yet I confess, a roof over my head, and a cup of water would not be unpleasant. The life of a village and all its quiet comforts, that light afforded, has made me feel fatigued since I saw it."

"Yes," answered Algernon Grey, "there is nothing very sweet in human associations, we know not till we are deprived of it for a time. The mind of man, I am sure, is ever intended for solitude; for the very life of home-happiness and quiet converse with fellow-creatures—ay, even of their society, though they be strangers to us, is the heart yearn for all the warm companionships of society when we are deprived

of it. I have society," said Agnes, simply, "you are with me."

Algernon Grey made no reply, but changed the subject to courts and courtly festivals, and went on interweaving, as he was well lighter with graver conversation, and going not without success, to interest and engage his fair companion's mind. The arts, almost at their height, or at least very declined, were one theme. Poetry furnished another. War, the chase, the pursuits of his own day, the habits of the world, differences between countries, then marked more strongly than at present, all passed in light review, and sometimes speaking of, sometimes jesting lightly, he gave that to all he said which he himself had

neither from weariness or from thoughtfulness, he knew not, but Agnes grew more silent and went on. Certain it is, that the words of William Lovet often came back to her mind. "Does not speak thus to every one," she said; and she asked herself whether it was to cheer the way for her that he thus trusted his powers, or that he really esteemed her highly. If the first, she was bound to feel grateful, though, to say sooth, she would have believed the latter. Either conclusion, however, was pleasant to her—ay, very

pleasant—almost too much so; for she grew frightened.

It lasted but an instant; and indeed then, with the happy egotism of woman's heart, she quelled her own alarm. "Surely," she thought, "one may esteem and like without fear or danger. Am I such a vain fool as to believe that every man who may see something better in me than the light coquettes of a court, must therefore love me? Am I such a weak fool that I must needs love, unasked, the first man who seems to treat me as a rational creature? I am silly indeed even to let my thoughts rest on such a matter. I will think of it no more. I will act as if such idle fancies had never crossed my brain, but as the heart prompts, and as nature leads."

She became more cheerful upon her delusion; but the way was long and wearisome. The soft ground loaded the tired foot; the turnings of the road disappointed expectation; and, though the bright moon still shone out to guide them, no village could be distinctly seen; for the thick orchards and small woods, which then occupied a large part of the valley of the Rhine, cut off the view from those who wandered in the low ground. The lady's garments too, fitted for the ride of the morning, were all unsuited to her long night ramble, and fatigue seized upon poor Agnes, and well nigh overpowered her. Twice she sat for some minutes by the road-side to rest; and, whenever the wetness of the swampy ground gave fair excuse, Algernon Grey took her in his arms and carried her; but still she was well nigh sinking from pure exhaustion, when a village clock struck clear and loud the hour of eleven. No great distance could exist between the musical bell and the ears that so gladly heard it; and with renewed hope and strength they let themselves be guided by the sound through the trees, till the tones of laughing voices came upon the air.

"There must be a village close at hand," said Algernon Grey, "and happily some Fair or merry-making seems to have kept the good peasants up and waking. See, there are cottages!" and the moment after they entered the long street of a small hamlet with the church at the further end, and beyond, rising high above the houses, the tower of some old castle built upon a mound.

The cottages were all dark and silent, and the merry voices they had heard seemed to go on before them singing in chorus.

SONG.

Brise the grape! draw the wine:
Oh the fruit of the vine!
It was given to console for the flood:
To bring light to the eye,
And to raise the heart high,
And to warm the old world with new blood.

When shut up in the ark,
Nash swam in the dark,
And no dove had returned to his breast;
He dreamed a glad dream,
That he saw a red stream
Flow forth from the cluster when pressed.

"We are weary," he said,
"We are cold, and half dead,
But there's comfort beneath this grim sea:
When we touch the hill top
The vine shall spring up,
And its warm juice shall set the heart free."

Bruse the grape! draw the wise!
 Oh, the fruit of the vine!
 It was given to console for the food:
 To bring light to the eye,
 And to raise the heart high,
 And to warn the old world with new blood.

Thus sung the peasants as they walked along, and Algernon Grey exclaimed, with a smile, "Their song gives good counsel, sweet lady. Though I saw last night that you were no wine drinker, you must now even consent to take some of the juice of the grape, whose qualities these good men celebrate. The inn where they have been tasting it cannot be far, and you will at length have rest and refreshment."

"Rest, rest," said Agnes, "is all I need;" but Algernon would not believe that food too was not wanted.

At length a light was seen streaming forth from a door not far from the church; and a good stout country girl, throwing forth into the midst of the street some torn and scattered flowers, which had decked the little hall of the hostelry for the country festival, appeared at the door. It was a glad sight for poor Agnes Herbert, and she drew a long deep sigh, while Algernon Grey inquired if they could have refreshment there, and rest for the night.

The girl seemed hardly to comprehend him, but called the bustling landlady, who gazed at the two gaily dressed, but worn and travel-stained strangers, for a moment, with looks of doubt and wonder. Agnes, however, in few quiet words, explained her situation, using, as far as she knew it, the jargon of the country; and the good woman's whole manner was changed in a moment. Instead of doubt and suspicion of her guests, which she had before displayed, she was now all motherly tenderness toward the young and beautiful creature before her, although she was not without some embarrassments, also, as to the accommodation of her unexpected visitors. Situated in a remote and distant village, where a traveller very rarely staid for the night, she had neither room nor bed prepared; and, though plenty of supper, she said, was to be obtained in a moment, and as good wine as any in the Circle, she did not see how she could get two beds ready, although her daughter would willingly give up her own for the young lady's convenience. Algernon Grey relieved her from a part of her difficulties by telling her that he could sleep very well where he was, and that the table or the bench in the large room, where she had received her guests, would form a bed good enough for him, if she would prepare a room for Agnes as soon as possible. With this latter injunction she promised to comply; but there were two obstacles to its literal fulfilment, namely, first, the good landlady's determination that her guests should partake of a supper before they slept; and secondly, that the hostess herself, and all her people, were boors of the Palatinate, who are not celebrated for the quickness of their resolutions.

In vain did the young gentleman hurry her; in vain did Agnes protest that she wanted rest before all things; half a dozen dishes, dressed in various strange manners, were placed on the table before them, as they sat by a dim and comfortless lamp, the mistress of the house observing sagely, that it could do them no harm *on earth* to eat some supper after so many ad-

ventures, and that, in the mean time, the lady's bed could be prepared.

After having discovered that they were in the village of Shriesheim, Agnes Herbert and Algernon Grey were left for more than half an hour alone in the dinner-room of the little inn; and deeply did the fair girl feel his conduct during that time; for although, with kindness and every gentle attention, he pressed her to take some food and drink some wine; though, with cheerful gaiety he strove to amuse and cheer her, yet there was no token of respect that he did not show, to diminish or remove any embarrassment springing from her position with regard to himself. He made her smile; he even made her laugh; he awakened her fancy, to lead her thoughts to gay and happy images: he rendered his conversation light, playful, and sunshiny, but took care that it should be sufficiently reserved to place his fair companion at her ease, and to make her almost forget that she was not with him in one of the saloons of the palace of Heidelberg. Her weariness somewhat decreased as she sat and listened; and, to tell the truth, by the time the landlady returned to conduct her to her bedroom, Agnes Herbert was more disposed to remain where she was, and listen to sounds which fell with dangerous softness on her ear.

Nevertheless she rose instantly, and held out her hand to her companion, bidding him farewell for the night. He took it, and pressed his lips upon it, wishing her good rest, and fair dreams.

Agnes gazed upon him with a smile as he did so, saying, "Methinks it is I who ought to kiss your hand, and thank you again and again for all your acts of kindness in every way, all of which I have felt, from the saving of my life to the soothing of my mind; but I must leave others to do it who are more capable—I have no words."

CHAPTER XI

ONE of the first cares of Algernon Grey, when Agnes had left him for the night, was to send off a messenger to the castle of Heidelberg, to announce, even at that late hour, that the lady was in safety. It was with difficulty, indeed, that any one could be procured to undertake the task; for Germany is a country in which there are some things that people will not do even for money. But a man was at length found to walk the distance, and to set out at once. The young Englishman's next thought was how to obtain horses for the following morning; but it was not till the messenger had departed that this occurred to him; and when it did he felt some doubt as to whether a woman's saddle could be obtained for the lady.

The good hostess undertook the task, however, without making any difficulty, naming a neighboring farmer's horse for himself, of whose qualities he was very willing to run the risk, and saying that their minister's daughter had a nice ambling pad, which she would lend very willingly to bear that pretty lady to the castle.

This being settled, and pure water having been procured to wash away from his face and neck the traces of all he had lately gone through, Algernon Grey was left alone in the hall, to

and repose as he best could. But for a long time he sought no rest, at least for the busy brain and anxious thought. During the three or four hours last past, his mind had been fully occupied, at first with perils and dangers, and with a sweeter and not less engrossing task at an after period; but now, suddenly reverting to still earlier events, he turned to inquire what might be the result to the adversary whom he had met in the wood, of his sudden departure from the scene of strife. Apprehensions crowded upon him for the fate of the Baron of Oberntraut. The page, he feared, might have seen him hurry to the rescue of Agnes, and, thinking only of duty to his master, might have neglected to fulfil the orders he had received, in his anxiety to trace and assist him. The wounded man might have been left to bleed to death on the meadow, and, though he felt that he was not to blame, yet Algernon Grey would have given a king's ransom to be sure that his opponent had met with proper aid and treatment.

Thought, he knew, was fruitless, upon this subject at least; and yet he continued to think upon it for some time, till the image of Agnes Herbert began to mingle with these waking reveries, and with it a new source of anxiety; she was so beautiful, so gentle, so full of every grace and quality which he had dreamed of as perfection in woman, that he could not but think of her with tenderness. He would not believe that he thought of her with love; and yet he dreaded his own sensations. Once more he made strong resolutions to quit Heidelberg and the Palatinate immediately—to see her no more—to wander far—to forget her. Poor youth! he had some experience of the world, but he had not learned how completely all human resolutions are the sport of circumstances; he had not yet learned that if in our weakness or our passions we do not break them voluntarily, there are a thousand little incidents over which we have no control, which step in between us and their execution. His determination was firm and strong, however; his conviction of the right course was not in the least shaken; and, making up his mind at length to accompany Agnes back to the castle, letting her see no change or difference in his manner, but to leave her there and to depart the next day, he seated himself near the table, bent his head upon his arms, and gradually sank into sleep.

In that strange, mysterious state, when a dull heavy curtain falls between the mortal senses and all their external objects, when life alone remains, and the spirit is cut off from all communication with the rest of creation, while fancy yet from time to time—ay, and memory too—wakes up with strange caprices, to deal with past and future things; in that great mystery of sleep, which none have solved, notwithstanding the laborious idleness of their efforts, images, not new, perhaps, presented themselves to his eyes, but surely arranged in novel and fantastic forms. Neither was it remembrance of the things last past that called up the visions to his eyes; he saw not his adversary lie bleeding on the grass; he saw not the drowning horse, the sinking girl; no fierce engulfing stream rolled before his eyes; no whirling bark bore him onwards through the darkness of the night. Yet Agnes was with him in his dreams.

Bright, as in her festival beauty she had led him through the castle halls, she now guided him through gardens of sweet flowers, stopping here and there to pluck them, and wind them into coronets for his brow. Then came another form across them, beautiful but fierce like a young tigress, and aimed a dagger at his heart, when William Lovet grasped her hand and plunged it in her own bosom.

The vision passed away, more profound sleep succeeded; and when Algernon Grey woke on the following morning, the early light was shining through the uncurtained windows of the room. His toilet was necessarily brief; but the matutinal peasantry were all astir before it was finished. A substantial breakfast was soon laid out for him and his fair companion; and, after waiting for a few moments, he sent up to inquire if she were ready. Agnes had been long up, and immediately joined him in the hall, refreshed with sleep, though somewhat pale with the terrors and fatigues of the preceding day. All her cheerfulness had returned, but yet it is an invariable law of human nature that no great emotions can be felt without leaving some permanent effect behind. The scenes she had gone through, the agitation she had felt, even the feelings she had experienced while wandering through the fields at night with Algernon Grey, had made an impression, never to be erased. I will not attempt to look into her heart, for she would not look into it herself; but yet there were external signs and indications, which, to any experienced and observing eye, would have told the change. There was a deeper tone in her manner; there was more soul and spirit in her look; there was a thoughtfulness even in her gayest smile. All spoke of the heart, and of newly-awakened sensations therein; and it seemed to Algernon Grey, as she advanced, and, raising her eyes full of deep thankfulness to his face, placed her hand in his, that she had now all which had been previously wanting to render her beauty well nigh divine.

The meal passed gaily over; they spoke of the adventures of the past day with the pleasant gratulation of dangers ended. They spoke of their morning ride back to Heidelberg with the sweet anticipation of pleasure to come; and, when breakfast was done, they mounted the two horses which had been procured for them, and, with a youth on a third to bring those which they rode back, they set out, with the bright morning sun shining on their way. The clouds and storms of the preceding day were all dispersed; and, in one bosom, at least, was a gay and cheerful heart, unburdened with anticipations of evil, or regret for any act in the past. As they rode along at the best pace which their horses could command, Agnes poured forth to her companion's ear all her bright and sparkling thoughts, lighted up by that purest of enjoyment, which the expectation of giving pleasure to others affords to a fine spirit. She talked of the joy her uncle would feel in clasping her in his arms again, after he had thought her lost for ever; of the calm, but hardly less heartfelt satisfaction of the Princess Dowager in seeing her once more; and, although in Algernon's bosom many a bitter and painful thought arose, many a struggle, when

he fancied that the last hours of their companionship were passing away for ever, he would not suffer any appearance of his own gloom to bring a shadow over her young happiness.

Thus fled the time; till, once more turning along the course of the Neckar, the town and the hills, and the laughing valley, and the proud castle, appeared before their eyes; and, crossing the bridge, and threading the narrow streets, they began to ascend the hill. For one moment they paused as they went up, to breathe their horses and to gaze over the scene; and Agnes, before they proceeded, let fall her rein, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed, "I never thought to see all this again."

Her eyes were raised to heaven in thankfulness, and then turned with a momentary glance to Algernon Grey. From an impulse she could not resist, she held out her hand to him, saying, simply, "But for you—but for you!"

They rode on more slowly, and, as they entered the court-yard of the castle, Algernon Grey said, "I must here leave you, dear lady, I believe; but be assured, that to have rendered you service in a moment of peril has been a happiness which will brighten many a future hour."

"But you will come with me to my uncle?" replied Agnes, with a start, and a look almost of alarm. "Oh, come, I beseech you; it is but fit that the deliverer of his child—of one that he loves as his child—should take her back to his bosom. Oh, come."

"If it will give you pleasure," replied Algernon Grey, with a faint smile; for he could not resist the temptation to linger still for a moment beside her, and he felt himself weak.

At the farther angle of the court there were a number of gentlemen and officers collected together, talking in the morning air; and, when Agnes and her companion rode up, several of them sprang forward to assist her in dismounting; but she paused till Algernon Grey was by her side, and then suffered him to lift her from her horse. Returning courteous, but brief answers to the congratulations, which showed how much anxiety had been felt for her fate during the preceding night, she looked round to her companion, saying, "Now I will lead the way to my uncle. I know he would never forgive me, if I did not bring you to him at once."

But, at that moment, a tall, elderly man, dressed in a military garb, advanced, and laid his hand on Algernon Grey's shoulder, saying, "I am sorry for the task, sir, but I am commanded to arrest you, wherever I may find you, in the Elector's name. I have sought for you all through the town this morning. Give up your sword."

Algernon Grey merely smiled, replying, "I have no sword to give up, sir. May I know my offence?"

"Your fatal encounter with the Baron of Obertraut," replied the old officer; "his father last night formally charged you with the murder of his son; and the Elector issued instant orders for your apprehension."

Agnes had turned deadly pale; and she raised her hand to her head, and thought deeply for a moment.

"Where is the Elector?" she exclaimed, at

length; "I will see his Highness myself. This gentleman saved my life; he rescued me, when all others abandoned me; he perilled existence a dozen times for a person whom he hardly knew—and is this his reward!"

"Fear not, dear lady," replied Algernon Grey; "this can have no bad results—a little inconvenience, but naught else. I met the Baron of Obertraut, as one honourable gentleman meets another, when called by him to the field; I met him without provocation on my part, without anger or animosity, in a place of his own choosing, on a quarrel of his own seeking. I spared him as long as I could; and, though I deeply grieve to hear that he is dead, I will ever maintain, that the wound I gave him was only in defence of my own life."

"He was supposed to be dying, though not dead," replied the old officer, "when the news came last night. This morning we have no intelligence."

"Where is the Elector?" asked Agnes again; "can any one tell me where I shall find him?"

"He was in the Princess's cabinet a few minutes ago, fair lady," said a young gentleman, stepping forward; "I do not think he has come forth yet."

With a quick step, a flushed cheek, and an eager eye, Agnes hurried away; and, at the same moment, the old officer whispered to a page who stood by: "Run and tell old Obertraut, he may want a word or two." He then turned to his prisoner, saying: "As I know not what may be the Elector's pleasure, sir, concerning you, it may be as well, that I should take you to his presence as speedily as possible. We can wait for him in his audience room, till he comes forth from the Princess's apartments. Have the goodness to follow me."

Thus saying, he led the way to the castle, up the stairs and through a gallery above; and then opening the door, he conducted his prisoner across a sort of waiting-hall, which displayed numerous doors on either side. At one of these, as he crossed, Algernon Grey beheld his fair companion of the night before, standing with a page by her side. Her beautiful head was bent down; her eyes fixed upon the ground; and she moved not in the least, though the sound of steps must have reached her ear. The old officer then opened a door on the opposite side; and the young Englishman followed into a small room containing but one chair. There they paused for about ten minutes, left entirely alone; and, at the end of that time, the old chamberlain, who had so unwillingly introduced Algernon and his cousin to the Elector's presence on the night of the nineteenth of August, passed through with a hurried step. As he went, his brow gathered into a heavy frown; and he glanced at Algernon Grey with his teeth set and his fingers clasped tight upon the sheath of his sword. A moment after a bustle was heard without; and the door being thrown open, the Elector entered with a stern brow, accompanied by several of his officers, and followed by Agnes Herbert and the chamberlain. Without noticing in any manner the young Englishman, the Prince advanced towards the chair, but did not sit down, turning as soon as he had reached it, and looking round.

"May it please your Highness," said the

gentleman who stood by Algernon's side, "I have, according to your command, arrested Master Algernon Grey here present, and crave your further orders concerning him."

The young gentleman took a step forward before the Prince could reply; and with a calm and well-assured countenance demanded, almost haughtily, for what offence his liberty had been abridged. The proud spirit of the free islander, the source of so much that is good, and alas, too often the source of so much that is disagreeable, showed itself for a moment in his tone and manner, though he took care to use all courtly terms and titles of reverence, and in the end, softening his lofty bearing, professed himself ever willing to abide by the laws of the land in which he sojourned, adding, "But knowing my innocence of all offence, I claim fair and equal justice, and a full inquiry, ere I am punished in any shape."

"Justice and fair inquiry you shall have, sir; fear not," answered the Elector, somewhat offended by his bold tone. "It is fortunate that we have been in England, and know that noblemen of that country fancy themselves equal to the princes of other lands, or we might think your bearing somewhat strange.—My lord of Obertraut, you laid a charge against this gentleman yesterday late at night—a most serious charge. We had not at that hour time to inquire fully; but will now hear you further."

"I charged him, your Highness, with the murder of my son," exclaimed the old chamberlain, coming forward, "the cool deliberate murder of my only child."

"What, is he dead, then?" inquired the Elector, with a look of stern grief.

"Not yet, sir," replied the other, "but he is dying. I saw him an hour ago—his voice could be hardly heard—his eyes were faded and dull, and his strong limbs, which have so often served the state, were feeble as an infant's; but this man, I say—this stranger who comes here, it may be as a spy into your court, seeks a quarrel with one of your best servants, lures him at nightfall into a remote place, and there, having left the two pages behind that no eye may see, slays a man, who, as we all know, in fair honest fight and deeds of arms, had no superior—scarce, indeed, an equal. It is of this I charge him, your Highness—it is for this I demand his punishment. Justice I will have by one means or another, and if by honied words, which he can well use, he should escape the arm of law, let him look well to himself, for I and mine will do ourselves right at last."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the Elector; "you injure a good cause by such rash threats.—What would you, lady? I am glad to see you safe.—I will speak with you presently.—This is no scene for you."

"Pardon, your Highness," answered Agnes, with the bold bearing of strongly roused feelings; "it is a scene in which I must bear a part whether I will or not. Listen to me for a moment. To this noble gentleman I owe my life, and I must raise my voice against his enemies. As I followed your royal lady here last night, my horse, frightened at some object in the wood, plunged over the bank into a torrent against which no living thing could struggle. He perished there, poor beast! Your

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Highness's servants saw it. They can tell you all."

"I have heard, I have heard," answered Frederic, bowing his head.

"All abandoned me," continued Agnes.—"Your followers—some of them stout soldiers—the gentleman who rode by my side, those who went before and they who followed—not one would venture on that frightful stream to aid a drowning girl, when this noble man, almost a stranger, in a frail bark, not stronger than a toy, which sank ere we reached land, came, found, and saved me. Many a time that night he perilled life for me—for one without a claim upon his goodness. Ay, at the very moment when this old lord declares he had just committed cool deliberate murder, he risked life, and all life gives, on the first generous impulse of his heart. Is this likely, noble prince?—Is this possible? Oh, no! the same high heart that bade him venture on that dark stream, at the scream of a dying girl, be you sure has ruled his actions, whatever they were, in his dealing with a proud adversary. Believe it not, believe it not! or else believe that honour is a name, truth falsehood, and noble self-devotion but a murderer in disguise."

She spoke eagerly, vehemently, and her beautiful countenance, lighted up with the roused energies of her heart, beamed like that of some reproving angel, till in the end the emotions that she felt overpowered her, and the light went out in tears.

"My lord and prince!" cried the old lord of Obertraut, his bitter rage taking the form of scorn under the restraint, such as it was, of a formal sense of courtesy towards a woman, "it is easy to understand and to forgive a lady pleading for her lover. But let us have done with such trash now. Love tales are not for such occasions!"

"Sir, you imply, if you do not assert, a falsehood," said Algernon Grey, sternly; "the very name of love has never been mentioned between this lady and myself. When I pushed off the skiff to save her, I saw not even who she was. But I will beseech you, dear lady, to leave us. In the justice of this noble prince I will fully rely, and by staying, you only expose yourself to wrong constructions from the fury of a rude old man."

The lord of Obertraut laid his hand upon his sword, and partly drew it; but one of the attendants held his arm, whispering a caution in his ear; and Agnes replied, "I go then, but only to call a better voice than mine to advocate the same cause."

"Now, Master Algernon Grey," said the Elector, "what have you to say to this charge brought against you? Speak, if you will; but if you do, I need not, I think, remind you that the truth is ever best, and in this case more especially, as it must undergo full inquiry before judges who will not be deceived."

"It is my habit, sir, to speak the truth," answered the young Englishman; "and if the Baron of Obertraut be still living, I require that his statement be taken from his own lips. He is a brave and noble gentleman, and will not belie even an adversary. Let his statement be compared with mine, and they will be found to tally, I am sure. I declare then, in the

presence, that he fixed a quarrel on me for I know not what : that he himself led me to the spot, made all the arrangements, attacked me first, I passively parrying his thrusts till the last moment, and then only lunged in self-defence. He will tell you, too, that I did all in man's power to staunch the blood and give him help ; and I should have returned to remain with him, after having sent my page for aid, had not that lady's cries called me to another task, and the swollen Neckar borne us both far away. Let his own boy be asked if he did not hear him give me directions on the road he followed, invite me to dismount, and lead the way himself. This is my simple tale, and, unless a gentleman and a soldier may without shame refuse such invitations, I have done no wrong in yielding to his."

"In this land, sir," answered the Elector, sternly, "a gentleman and a soldier not only may without shame, but must, refuse such invitations ; for, by my own law, now of some four years' date, all such encounters are prohibited most strictly."

"Then his be the blame," replied Algernon Grey, "for leading a stranger unacquainted with the law your Highness names, to violate it. Gladly would I have avoided that which I personally do not approve, but which habit not only sanctions but requires."

"My noble prince, this tale must be false," exclaimed the old lord of Oberntraut ; "you know my son right well, and that he is not one rashly to violate your Highness's laws."

Frederic smiled ; and, notwithstanding the sad importance of the occasion, a light murmur, somewhat like a laugh, ran round the court, to hear so peaceable a character given to the young baron. But the Elector immediately exclaimed, "Silence, gentlemen. This is unbecoming ! I am sorry, sir, to show severity to any one of your land," he continued, speaking to Algernon Grey ; "but, at all events, till your adversary's state is better known, and till we are sure what the termination will be, you must endure confinement as best you may ; I will myself inquire of those who have tended his wounds, whether they are mortal or not, and, when they shall judge it necessary, will cause his own account to be taken from his lips. Fear not : you shall have justice ; but at present you must retire. My good lord of Helmstadt, will you see him conveyed to the great tower, near the English building ? Let him have the vacant rooms on the third floor ; and I will afterwards put him in ward of some inferior officer."

"Look that you hold him safe, Helmstadt !" exclaimed the old lord of Oberntraut ; "for I call Heaven to witness that I will require blood for my son's blood, if not from him, from those who hold him."

"Silence, sir !" said the Elector, "and quit my presence ;" and waving his hand, as signal, to the lord of Helmstadt, then chief marshal, to remove his prisoner, the Elector turned to the Chancellor, Christopher of the Green, by Wegersberg, and spoke to him for several minutes, in a low tone.

CHAPTER XII.

IN the large round room I have described in a former chapter, with its column in the midst,

decked out with arms and banners, just as it had appeared when Algernon Grey first saw it, sat Colonel Herbert, the English Knight, as he was called at the castle, at the same hour when his visitor was brought before the Elector on the charge of murder. His brow was grave and thoughtful ; his eyes bent down, as if he were considering some subject deeply. Nevertheless, it must be said that his mind was not affected by any immediate apprehensions for his niece, though he was not yet aware of her return to the castle ; but Algernon Grey's message of the night before had reached him duly, showing that she had been rescued from the great peril which she had encountered.

The first news of the preceding evening had represented her as lost to him for ever. When her horse had plunged over, the greater part of the train of the Prince and Princess had, as I have shown, galloped quickly forward. William Lovet had followed immediately after the accident ; and the small party of servants and attendants, whom Agnes and the Englishmen preceded, saw the accident as well as he did ; but not one of them ventured to make an effort for the lady's deliverance. All that they thought fit to do, was to hurry on as quickly as possible, and to inform the Elector of what had occurred, very naturally believing the case to be a hopeless one, and the lady lost beyond recovery. Frederic, for he was in truth a kind-hearted and an amiable prince, at once stopped the cavalcade, and eagerly consulted with those around him what was to be done. But all agreed, that long ere assistance could be rendered, the lady must have perished, so that it was in vain to attempt aught for her deliverance. Elizabeth of England, though not more hopeful than the rest, urged immediate search, or exertion in some way ; but her voice was overruled by those who felt that no exertion could be successful ; and one old man even ventured to say,—"It is all in vain. The Neckar will have its due ; a certain number are drowned in it every year ; and if it had not taken this one, it would have taken another."

In deep, stern, solemn bitterness of heart ; with that feeling of despair which nothing can produce but the loss of the only one truly and entirely beloved, Colonel Herbert had passed the hours from the moment that the first news had been communicated to him till he heard a hurried foot ascending the stairs of the tower ; and then he started up and gazed towards the door. He had not wept—his was too stern and powerful a nature for tears ; but, concentrated in the heart's deepest recesses, the feelings, which in other persons so often melt away like spring thunder-clouds in falling drops, burned and seared, till all seemed desolate as a desert.

"They have found the body," he said to himself, when he heard the step ; but his servant ran in with a face of joy, exclaiming, "The lady is saved, Sir Henry, the lady is saved ; here a peasant has come from the country to bear the news to the castle."

"Where is he !" exclaimed Herbert ; "bring him hither—quick !"

"Alas ! sir," cried the man ; "the hall-porter has let him go."

Herbert seized him by both the hands, and

gazed earnestly in his face,—“Are you lying?” he exclaimed; “are you lying?”

“No, Sir Henry, I would not lie for the world—on such a matter as this,” the servant answered. “The hall-porter sent his boy; and before I would bear you the news I went up to inquire; but there I found it was beyond all doubt. The man had come on foot three or four leagues from a village down the river; and the gentleman, who saved the lady, had given him two gold pieces to bear the tidings. He fancied himself as rich as a prince, the porter said; and had gone to get himself drunk in the town.”

“Enough, enough!” answered Herbert; “a man would not give gold to spread such a report falsely. Leave me!” and seating himself at his table again, he remained in deep thought, without one exclamation of joy, with scarcely the movement of a muscle, till the castle clock struck two; and then, retiring into his bedroom, he laid himself down and slept profoundly. When he rose on the following morning, a new train of somewhat anxious thoughts took possession of him. “Who was it that had saved his Agnes?” he asked himself. “Who was it that had borne her company through the past long night? Was it one who could be trusted? One who would respect the purity of her mind and heart, and guard her like a shield from all that would sully as well as injure?”

He was still busy with these fancies, when his ear caught a light step on the stair; he knew it well; and, starting up, threw wide the door. In an instant Agnes was in his arms, and a few moments were given up to joy and gratulation. But the lady soon turned to a different theme. “I will tell you all hereafter,” she said; “but at present you must come to the Elector to plead for and defend the saviour of your Agnes;” and with rapid and eager words she gave a clear brief account of all that had taken place since her arrival at the castle.

Herbert gazed upon her glowing countenance as she spoke, with a thoughtful and inquiring look, and then said in a low voice: “So it was this Englishman, then, was it?”

“Yes,” exclaimed Agnes, eagerly; “all others abandoned me; even his own cousin, who had been riding by my side, spurred on and left me. But for him, I must inevitably have perished.”

“And he fought Obertraut, too,” continued Herbert, in the same tone, “and vanquished him—that were no easy task. But I knew what would take place between those two—I saw it; but deceived myself as to the time, else I would have stopped it.”

“Nay, come,” said Agnes, laying her hand upon his arm; “if you come not speedily they will have sent him to prison.”

“Stay awhile, my child,” answered Herbert. “So this young man was kind to you?”

“Most kind,” replied Agnes, somewhat surprised at her uncle’s manner; “nothing that could be done to make me comfortable was left undone by him.”

“He has seen much of the world—been in courts, and camps, and corrupt foreign lands,” said Herbert, musing. “Where slept he at the place of your last night’s rest?”

“In the hall below,” answered Agnes.

“And doubtless, by the way, he cheered and comforted you!” continued her uncle.

“With the kindest courtesy,” replied the lady.

“And with tales of love?” said Herbert.

“Not one word,” cried Agnes, with the warm blood mounting into her cheek; “naught that could be so construed for an instant. What is it that you seek to know?” she added, pressing her hand upon his arm, and looking full into his face. “Why do you speak so strangely? I have naught to tell—not a syllable to say that your ear would not be well pleased to receive. If you seek to know how my deliverer treated me—it was as a kind and gentle brother toward a sister just saved from danger—somewhat colder, perhaps, than a brother might have been, but still as tender, as considerate, as feeling. He aided, supported, cheered, strengthened me, with more reverence than was needed, perhaps; but yet I thanked him for it, for it set me at my ease; and through those long hours, I walked, hanging on his arm as if it had been your own, with the same confidence and trust, and to the end was not deceived; for not one word, nor act—and I am sure I may say thought also—was there which could give me even a moment’s pain. Surely you do not doubt your Agnes?”

“No, no, my child,” cried Herbert, throwing his arms round her; “I wished but to be sure that this young man was what I thought him. Now let us go: I am ready to plead his cause for you, and I trust I shall not plead it vainly. I saw the challenge given, and though I was not near enough to hear the words, feel sure that it came from Obertraut. Come, Agnes,” and, with the lady leaning on his arm, he walked quickly from his own tower to that part of the castle where the apartments of Frederic and Elizabeth were situated. He was there informed that the Elector was still in the small hall, as it was called; and, hurrying thither, he threw open the door. The figure which his eye first sought did not appear; for Algernon Grey had already been removed. But the Elector was still standing at the farther end of the room, conversing with the gentlemen around him; and Herbert advanced at once towards the Prince, bowing low as he approached.

“Ah, Herbert, is that you?” exclaimed Frederic, when he saw him; “I wish to speak with you a moment alone. Gentlemen, I need not detain you longer. Stay you, fair lady: I have counsel for your ear also.”

At the hint thus given, the room was instantly cleared of all persons but the Prince, the English officer, and his niece; and, as soon as the door was closed, Frederic exclaimed: “What is it, Herbert? there seems an angry spot upon your brow. The affair of this young nobleman, I will warrant. Well, that will be easily explained.”

“You mistake me, noble Prince,” answered Herbert; “I may be deeply grieved to find that a noble gentleman, who has not only just saved this dear child’s life at the hazard of his own, but through a long night, when she had no one else to protect her, has treated her with that mingled respect and courtesy—that tenderness, united with reverence, which none but the noble heart can feel or show—should

have fallen under your indignation; but anger, on my part, towards the Prince I serve, is out of the question."

"You have heard the cause?" said Frederic, interrupting him; "this sad duel with young Oberntraut."

"Oh yes, your Highness, I know all that," replied Herbert; "I saw Oberntraut seek the quarrel, and give the challenge."

"Then you are sure it came from him?" inquired Frederic.

"I heard not the words which were spoken, sir," answered Herbert; "but there are looks and gestures as good as any words, and from them I feel quite sure that the challenge came from him, who has fallen, it seems. Besides, it was he who stopped my young friend, calling him from my side, and, as he did so, I marked the frowning brow and flashing eye—the lip that quivered with scorn and anger, and the impatient gesture of the hand. It must have been hard to bear that demeanour of his, and yet the other's was calm and grave, as if resisting passion rather than yielding to it. Let the matter be inquired into, my Prince; and if it be as I say, surely you will not visit the faults of Oberntraut on the head of Master Grey, even by imprisonment."

"For his own safety, Herbert," replied the Prince, putting his hand upon his arm, "he must endure confinement for a while. If this young lord recovers, we can easily settle all differences between them, and quiet down the old man's rash heat; but if he dies, you know old Oberntraut, and are well aware he would move heaven and earth, and take any means, lawful or unlawful, for revenge. In that case, we must get this young gentleman out of the Palatinate as secretly as may be. In the mean time, however, he must be a prisoner; for a chance-meeting between him and the old man might be fatal to one or both."

"I trust your Highness will take care then," answered Herbert, "that all shall be done to make his imprisonment light."

"As light as may be," replied the Prince. "I have been forced to put on a stern face, and use harsh words, in order to satisfy my court that I show no unjust favour to one of my fair lady's countrymen; but, at the same time, I never dreamt of dealing hardly with him, and I was but even now thinking of giving him into your custody, my good friend. Then you can attend to all his wants and wishes,—but you must be responsible to me for his safe custody, and you shall swear, upon your honour, that by no indulgence you grant him, shall he be seen beyond the walls of his present prison at any time when old Oberntraut is within the castle-gates."

"Then the youth must be mewed up altogether," answered Herbert, "unless we bring him out to walk at night, for that fierce old wolf is here from sunrise till evening close."

"All that you must arrange as you can," answered the Prince. "I would not, for half my dominions, have those two meet— But will you accept the custody, and give the promise? for I must now go."

"Well, well, since it may be no better," rejoined the English officer, bluntly, "I must even take what *our Highness* is pleased to

grant: I give you my honour then, sir, to observe the orders you have given, but I must have a soldier or two to keep guard, for we cannot prevent him, I suppose, from seeing his friends."

"During the day," answered Frederic, "but not after nightfall. You can take a guard if you think it necessary. Come to me in half an hour, and you shall have an order for his custody. We must hear the tale of your strange adventures, fair lady, at some other time,—for the present, fare-you-well!"

Thus saying, the Prince quitted the room by the door on his right side; and, drawing Agnes's arm through his, Herbert returned towards his own lodging, saying: "You shall be his little gaoles, Agnes; and, as he has dealt nobly and truly by you, so you shall repay his services by kind services in return."

CHAPTER XIII.

In a large and stately chamber of one of the older parts of the castle at Heidelberg sat a lady of the middle age, about half an hour after Algernon Grey had been removed from the presence of the Elector. The room was a long parallelogram, tapestried all round with richly worked hangings, representing in glowing colours and somewhat warm designs, the loves of Vertumnus and Pomona. Few specimens of that now abandoned branch of needlework could compete with those which were there displayed. The flowers and the fruit seemed to stand out from the background; the rich clusters of the grape and apple, the leaves of the trees, and the very birds upon the branches, all seemed to project into the chamber, and gave it the air of an arbour. While the forms of the garden goddess and her changeable lover were displayed with a truth and energy which, though not at all offensive to the less delicate eyes of those days, would be judged rather indecorous in our own. This fine suite of tapestry had not been treated with much reverence by the hands that hung it up; for over each door, and there were three in the walls, a piece of the same size had been cut out and bordered with gilt leather, much to the inconvenience of the legs of Vertumnus in one instance, and to the waist and arms of Pomona in another—for the purpose of nailing the slips so detached to the door, the opening and closing of which were greatly facilitated. The ceiling above was of dark oak, richly wrought in pentagons, which, rising one above the other, diminishing as they came forward and ending with a spot of gold in the centre, took the shape of stars to the eye below, before it had time to trace out the elaborate workmanship; and from the central pentagon hung a large rich gilt lustre of twelve lights. Chairs covered with crimson velvet, tables with spiral legs and inlaid tops, a small moss carpet for the feet in one corner of the room, a lute, a number of books, amongst which were several huge folios, and a quantity of very fine rare porcelain, made up the furniture of the chamber, which, though the light was by no means strong, even on a summer morning, had an air of comfort and calm state about it, which was pleasant and impressive to the eye.

There is a general harmony in all things, which we seldom see violated—or rather, perhaps, I should say, things naturally fall into harmony, and are never long in adapting themselves harmoniously to each other. The man and his dress, the room and its tenant, the church and the worship there celebrated, have all their peculiar fitness to each other; and so it was in this instance; for the lady, who was there seated, was exactly what one would have expected to find in that place. She was a woman of a grave and thoughtful aspect, tempered by a kindly look about the mouth, though the brow was firm and thoughtful, and the eyes clear and very bright. The lightness of youth was gone; and, if she could not exactly be called graceful, she was dignified; and yet there was the ease of high birth and high education, which is in itself a kind of grace, and the dignified carriage was softened by an occasional touch of homeliness of manner the most remote from vulgarity or coarseness. She was large in person, though not very tall; and the fine cutting of the mouth, the dimpled chin, and the small, though somewhat aquiline nose, displayed some pretensions still to that beauty, which courtiers had celebrated in her younger days. Her dress was very peculiar, consisting of a gown of black velvet, covered down the front and on the arms with embroidery of the same sombre colour; and, from the neck to the bosom, she wore a tucker of the most magnificent white lace; above this, round the neck, was a large frill of plain white muslin; while springing from the shoulders was a sort of black silk wimple or hood, much in the form of a cockle-shell, stiffened with whalebone, and ready to receive the head and neck, ruff and all. The coif consisted of a piece of black velvet trimmed round with lace, fastened to the hair behind, and brought over the head in a peak upon the wide-extended forehead, from which the hair was drawn back, so as to leave the whole brow completely exposed.

Such was the dress and appearance of the Electress Dowager, Louisa Juliana, sister of the famous William, Prince of Orange, one of the most remarkable and clear-sighted women of her day; and I have thought it fit to dwell thus far upon the mere description of her person and habiliments, inasmuch as portraits of this princess are very rare, and no description, that I know, exists.

At the moment I speak of, she had just seated herself in a great chair, and taken up a book; while one of her waiting-maids, who had run forth from her dressing-room by the door on the left hand, was thrusting another large pin into the black velvet coif to fasten it more securely to her hair, a precaution which, it seems, she had neglected while actually at her toilet. When she had done, the Electress looked up, inquiring, "Have you sent to my cousin, the Lady Agnes?"

"Eldrida is gone, may it please your Highness," said the maid with a low reverence, and withdrew.

The reader will remark that the Electress Dowager applied the name of cousin to the person of whom she spoke; but it must not be thence inferred that they stood in that degree of consanguinity to each other, for the lady to

whom she sent was no other than Agnes Herbert; and it was very common in those days for high personages, either as a mark of reverence or love, to give the name of cousin to others of inferior station in no degree related to them.

For about five minutes Louisa Juliana continued to read with somewhat of a careless and inattentive air, as if she were merely seeking to occupy a short space of time with the semblance of some employment, while her thoughts were really busied with other things. At the end of that period a slight tap was heard at the door—not the great entrance which issued forth on the corridor and the stairs—but that of the dressing-room, and the next instant Agnes Herbert entered and approached the chair of the Princess. She had changed her dress since her return; and though, perhaps, her face was a shade paler than it had been before all the adventures of the preceding day, yet her exceeding loveliness was not diminished, even if the character of her beauty was somewhat changed.

The Electress rose partly from her seat as soon as she saw her; and when Agnes bent, almost kneeling at her feet, she cast her arms round her, and pressed her warmly to her heart.

"Welcome, welcome, my sweet child," she cried; "I thought that fate, after taking from me so much and so many that I loved, had deprived me also of my Agnes. Oh, my dear girl! you cannot fancy the anguish of my heart during many a long hour last night; seeing what I suffered, they came to my bedside at one this morning and told me that, by some miracle, you had been saved. I would scarcely believe the tidings, loved one; and till I heard just now that you had returned, a shade of unbelief would linger in my mind."

"I should have been here ere now, your Highness," answered Agnes, "as bound in duty and in love, had not a matter of importance called me to the presence of the Elector. My deliverance was, indeed, a miracle, though yet one should scarcely say so, when it was brought about by that which should be as frequent as it is seldom, the gallantry and devotion of a gentleman and a courtier."

"Nay, sit you down here, my Agnes, and tell me all your marvels," said the Electress; "for as yet I have heard naught of the story. Indeed, I believe all in the castle are as ignorant as myself."

"Not now," replied Agnes; "in different forms, part truth and part falsehood, it has spread, I find, far and near. But I will tell you all, noble lady, exactly as it happened; for it is a pleasant task when one has naught but gratitude and praise to speak;" and with more minute details than even she had indulged in towards Herbert, the fair girl proceeded to relate to her high friend all that had occurred since she had left her on the preceding day, till the moment she had left the Elector's presence. "I have said all;" but there were two things which she omitted: William Lovet's praises of his cousin, and the keen questions which her uncle had put to her on her return. For some reason, she knew not what herself, she spoke not on these two themes, but all the rest was told.

Louisa Juliana listened with thoughtful, earnest attention; her countenance did not vary much, for she was habituated to command its expression; but still there were particular parts on which she seemed to ponder more than others. All Agnes said of her escape from the imminent peril of death, and of him who had delivered her, she seemed to mark peculiarly; but, at the story of his arrest and what had followed, she took apparently but little heed, merely saying: "It will be found that Obertraut provoked it."

When the young lady had done, she laid her hand upon her shoulder and kissed her brow, thanking her for her tale, and adding: "This is indeed a noble and a generous man, my Agnes; and I must see him and tell him what I think, for your sake, my sweet cousin."

"But he is in prison," answered Agnes; "and I fear, may not be enlarged for a long time."

"I must see him, nevertheless," replied the Electress, thoughtfully, "on many accounts, dear girl!" she paused, and seemed to meditate a moment or two, after which she added: "I had heard of his being here before, Agnes—nay, you yourself told me of his demeanour the other night, but it is not that alone; a hint has reached my ears, that he has more objects than one, that he is not merely a traveller for pleasure; and this calm and thoughtful character in one so young, bespeaks, methinks, a brain burdened with weighty matters. My son, I can see, judges the same—he denies not that he knows him, and that he is not exactly what he seems. I must see him, Agnes; and that, too, as speedily as may be."

"But how," dear lady!" inquired Agnes Herbert.

"Oh, that will be easy," answered the Electress; "your uncle has him in custody, you say; well, you shall be his turnkey for the night, and bring him forth to take the air upon the walls, or in the gardens; then lead him out beneath my windows, which shall be open; and, when you hear my little silver bell, conduct him hither by the small staircase in the tower. I must know more of his errand, Agnes; and, if it be what I think, I may find cause for a long conference. The fate of my son and his whole house, the fate of Germany, nay, perhaps of Europe, is now in the balance, and I would fain prevent any fresh weight being thrown into the wrong scale. Wait till night has fallen, and I will ring my bell some time before ten,—tell Herbert you have my commands."

"Which shall be obeyed, depend upon it, madam," answered the young lady, and then remained silent, as if waiting to receive any further directions.

"And so you are doubtless very grateful to this young cavalier, my Agnes," said the Princess, at length.

"What would I not do to show my thankfulness!" cried the fair enthusiastic girl.

"Anything in reason, child," replied the elder lady, "but let not gratitude carry you too far in your young fancies. The saving of a life may be paid too dearly by the peace of the heart."

Agnes smiled gaily. "Oh, no fear of that, noble lady," she answered, "he is no love-maker, and if I could thank him for anything *more earnestly* than for his chivalrous deliver-

ance, it would be for his kind, calm, brotherly treatment throughout yesternight, without one word or look that the vainest heart could construe into gallantry."

"Strange conduct for so young a man! Strange gratitude for so fair a girl!" replied the Electress, laughing. "Yet be not too sure of yourself or him, dear child. Love may be heaping up the fuel before he sets the flame to the pile. Mark me, my Agnes, and do not let your cheek glow so warmly. I do not tell you not to love: that were both vain and dangerous: I only say, know him better before you do. All I have heard of him speaks well, and marks him out for no ordinary man; but yet it is right when gratitude is so warm in a young heart, to take care that it lights up no other flame without our knowing it. Yours is a rich fancy, my Agnes, and an ardent spirit, and my good cousin Herbert is not so careful as a mother."

"Oh, he is more careful than you deem him," replied the young lady, with a faint smile at the remembrance of his questions; "he interrogated me as strictly this morning as a grand inquisitor; would know all my companion's words and acts towards me, even to the smallest trifle."

"But asked you nothing of your own, I will warrant," said the Princess, "that is his character, my child. All the English are theoretical, and he has his system, good as far as it goes, but often carried too far, and often inapplicable. Because he met with one woman in life who was an angel, if ever one dwelt on earth, and has known few others, his rule would seem to be to trust all women, and to doubt all men. But my advice, my Agnes, to every young being placed as you are, would be to doubt yourself and ever to fly danger!"

"And do you doubt me, dear lady?" asked Agnes, almost mournfully.

The Princess cast her arm round her, exclaiming, "No, dear girl! No! I would doubt myself sooner; but what I have said was yet in kindness, Agnes. This same gratitude often leads on along a flowery path into a wilderness. Sweet smiling blossoms strew the path at first, and as we gather them we go forward farther than we know till frightened at the growing desolation; round we would turn back and then find the way shut with thorns and brambles. I say, beware, my sweet child, till you have known him longer, better, nearer. Then if he seek to win your heart, and you can give it, let it be so; for I am not one to undervalue the worth of true and honest love. It may have its pains; but I do believe that woman's life, at least, is not complete till she has known its blessings."

"But why should he seek to win my poor heart?" asked Agnes. "Why should I fancy that he ever will? He has never said one word that should justify me to myself for dreaming of such a thing. Doubtless he has seen many brighter, better, fairer than myself, and will see many more. As yet I have done naught to win his love, though your Highness thinks, I know, he has done much to win mine; but there is a vast difference between gratitude and love. I am too proud to love unsought, believe me, and till he either tells me so, or I have accomplished something worthy of love from him, I will not even fancy that he can feel aught but courteous kindness to me."

"Poor child!" said the Electress, "you are a scholar of the lowest class in this same school of love, I see. You have done naught to merit love! Have you not made yourself to him an object of eager, anxious thought, and apprehension, when, whirling in the torrent, he rushed to save you? Have you not given him cause for the display of gallant daring and fine enthusiasm! Have you not wakened through the live-long night, the tender, soft emotions of the heart for one protected, soothed, supported! What is this but to merit love from any man! You much mistake, my Agnes, if you think men's hearts are won by that which will win woman's. Man's is a different nature, a calling unlike ours. His task to strive with danger for himself and others, to shield the feeble, and love those he shields. Ours to suffer and to shrink, to seek protection from a stronger arm, and pay with our whole hearts the price of man's support. Overwhelm him with benefits, give him wealth, distinction, a kingly crown if you have it to bestow; save him from death, or pain, or misery, still you will twine no bond around his heart so strong as that which binds it to the object of his care or pity. But enough of this, my child, I would but warn you; for every woman carries a traitor in her bosom, ever ready to yield the citadel unless well watched. Bring this brave gentleman to me, as I have said, to-night. When I have seen him, I will tell you more."

Agnes retired, but she went not straight to her uncle's tower. It was her own chamber she first sought, and there, for well nigh an hour, with her fair face resting on her hand, she remained in deep and seemingly painful meditation. I will not pause to inquire what were the busy thoughts that crossed that young and inexperienced brain; what the emotions which filled that pure, warm, gentle heart. For a time her reveries were certainly bitter ones; but then she seemed to cast them off with some strong resolution; the clouds passed from her brow, her sparkling eye looked up, and rising with a gay laugh, she cried, "No, no; I will not give it another thought!" and with a light step, hurried to Herbert's tower.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN the custody of the Grand Marshal, Algernon Grey was removed from the presence of the Elector, and passing across the hall where he had seen Agnes waiting, he was led into one of the open galleries which ran along the great court on one side, and thence by innumerable small passages, scarcely large enough for two persons to thread them abreast, to the door of a chamber which opened upon one of the landing-places of a tolerably wide staircase.

The door was low, scarcely of the height of the young Englishman's head, and covered with large bars and bands of iron, as well as heavy-headed nails. When it was opened, it displayed on the right-hand side a small ante-room, with a high window, opposite to which was another low-browed arch with a door, and beyond that a third door equally solid and strong with the first.

The Lord of Helmsstadt, as they passed, pointed towards the arch on the left, saying,

in a courteous tone: "There will be your bedroom, and here your servants can remain, if, as I trust, it be the Elector's pleasure that your usual attendants should be admitted to you." As he spoke, he led the way towards the third door; and, turning the heavy key that was in the lock, opened it, motioning the young Englishman to go in.

Algernon Grey did so in silence, and with no very pleasant anticipations; but he was agreeably disappointed in finding himself in a room bearing very little the aspect of a prison, cheerful in itself, and commanding that same unrivalled view which he had beheld before from the castle grounds. In shape, the chamber was an exact half-moon; the large round tower in which it was situated being cut by a partition, which left this segment as a sort of wide saloon; while the other half was again divided into two, the one portion being appropriated to the purposes of a bed-room, and the second and lesser part serving as an ante-room, except a small space which was separated from the rest to contain the staircase.

The furniture of the room was costly and convenient. Nothing was wanting that could contribute to the comfort of its denizen; and Algernon Grey drew from the aspect of the whole place an augury that it was not the Elector's intention to show any very great severity towards him. The hangings, the tables, the velvet chairs, however attracted but little of his attention; for he walked at once forward to one of the three large windows, through which the full torrent of light was streaming into the room, though not indeed the sunshine; for it was yet morning, and that side of the tower looked to the south and west.

"A glorious prospect," he said, turning to the Marshal; "methinks a day or two's sojourn here will be no great infliction. Nevertheless, I protest against the right of any one to place me in confinement for that which I have done. Endurance, however, is a serviceable quality; and the Elector's will must be obeyed; but I do trust that I shall not be left here without some attendants within call; and that my servants and baggage may be brought up from the inn where I left them, little anticipating imprisonment."

"I will take the Elector's farther commands," replied the Lord of Helmsstadt. "Of course some persons will be appointed to attend upon you; but whether your own servants, or not, I cannot say. I must leave you alone for a time, greatly grieving that such a chance should have befallen so gallant a gentleman. We all know Lewis of Oberntraut well; and there is not a man in all the court who doubts that he has provoked this affair; but the Elector has been very strict in such matters lately, and, of course, he cannot show favour even were he inclined."

Thus saying, he withdrew; and Algernon was left alone. For an instant he gazed round the room, while the key grated heavily in the lock, and laughed in a light, cheerful tone. "Here I am a captive," he said; "well, though unexpected, it is no great matter. A few short hours, a few short days, what are they from the sum of life! and, forgetting that I have lost my liberty, I will think myself a prince

hospitably received, well lodged, and only, like the slave of the Haram, not suffered to go abroad. What an idle thing it is for a man to fret and wear himself with vain regrets over the loss of that shadowy thing, the portions of freedom that is left him by the usages of the world. In courts and cities, with the stiff bit of the law beneath his jaws, he is trained and curbed up by the habits of the land to go through his taught paces, like a horse in the manege, curveting here, and passaging there, with hardly a natural step in his whole allure. Here, with no eyes to watch me, with no form of restraint or customary ceremonies, I can have more real freedom than in a king's halls, although yonder door be locked and bolted. What is it that makes imprisonment painful? Either the anticipation of farther evils as its dark termination, or the prospect of its indefinite, perhaps interminable, extent. In a few days I shall be free. They dare not do me wrong. I have nothing further to apprehend. Why should the locking of that door jar upon my ear, when the hand that turns the key is on the outside! Had it been my own hand, ere I lay down to sleep, it would have been nothing—no, no, I will bear it lightly. Man doubles all the evils of his fate by pondering over them: a scratch becomes a wound; a slight an injury; a jest an insult; a small peril a great danger; and a light sickness often ends in death by the brooding apprehensions of the sick. What a magnificent scene! Methinks, I could contemplate that view for ever; and, forgetting all the world, live here an anchorite in the midst of a great city, worshipping God in the grand temple of his brightest works."

Vain, oh, how vain is it in man to strive, by the mere power of intellect, to quell or overrule the natural affections of the heart. The stoical philosophy would have broken down instantly, had not its teachers skilfully applied emollients to its harsh sternness, teaching not alone to bear the evils that fate inflicts, but often, also, to fly from them—ay, to fly, even though the place of refuge was the tomb: for, after all, the magnificent-miened crime of suicide was but a cowardly flight before a conquering army of the world's ills.

Vain was all the reasoning of Algernon Grey; and silently and slowly the solitary moments, as they passed, sapped the foundations of the tall edifice of lofty thoughts which he had so confidently built up. First he began to find the time go slowly; he felt delight in the beauty of the scene, it is true, but it was all still; nothing moved; the very air had fallen away, so that the leaves of the trees stirred not on the branches; and the green Neckar looked like a sheet of solid glass. He could not see into the streets of the town; the thickness of the walls excluded the garden below; the sky overhead was without a cloud; the glowing heat of the day kept the birds quiet; and the light changed so slowly, that the creeping on of the shadow here and the sunshine there was imperceptible to the eye. The prospect was beautiful, but it became monotonous; and a storm or cloud would have been a relief.

He began to turn his eyes towards the door, and wished that some one would come. The

knowledge that it was locked became oppressive to him; he felt that his philosophy was failing, and he determined to find or make an occupation. He had not yet seen the bed-room; and, walking through the door, which communicated with it, he examined the furniture it contained, looked out of the high window over the roofs of some of the buildings and against the walls of others. A pigeon, seated upon one of the gables, took flight at that moment, and whirled up into the free air. Algernon Grey knew then how much he had felt the loss of liberty; for to witness the bird's flight was joy to him, and yet it woke melancholy associations. As he saw it spreading its pinions lightly in the clear sky, sweeping round in a gay circle, and then darting away to meadow or to corn-field, he thought how beautiful a thing freedom is, how terrible is its loss. The bird disappeared; and walking slowly back into the other chamber, he seated himself in the window and gazed out; but bitter thoughts took possession of him; and the mind rambled on from one sad train of images to another. He thought of human life, its griefs, its cares, its changes. He viewed it all darkly, both its accidents and its ordinary course. "What is it," he said, "but a gradual development, filled with many an evil and many a danger, a short maturity and a long and sad decay? Scarcely have we touched our prime, when some failing power, some slackened energy, some corporeal, or some mental weakness, warns us that we are on the descent, and that all is thenceforward downward, downward to the grave. Thenceforward the game of life is all loss. One after another we cast the dice for a new stake; and fate is ever the winner against us: till, bankrupt in body and in mind, we go to bed and sleep—forgotten. Then, too, how often, even in the days of our highest energies, comes something to bar us from the treasures that we covet; some small but fatal obstacle, over which all our hopes fall prostrate; the eternal stumbling-block of circumstance that gives the ever-flying good time to escape us. Often!—Nay, I should have said ever; for that dark inscrutable hand of fate still mingles with the cup of joy, even when sparkling most brightly in the hand of youth, the bitter drop that soon pervades it all."

He turned his mind to other things. "Well, it matters not," he thought, "there is surely one unalloyed pleasure, at all events,—to do good, to save, protect, befriend;" then, for an instant, his fancy rested joyfully upon the events of the night before. He thought of Agnes Herbert, of having saved her from destruction, of having rescued her from the dark waters of that turbulent stream, of having given back to life that creature, so full of all life's brightest energies; and, for a moment, he was happy. She rose before him in her young beauty, sparkling with graces, heart beaming from her eyes; love and happiness upon her lips; her clear, fair brow, like the expanse of heaven; and the soul of loveliness in every look and every movement. The vision was too bright, and, clasping his hands together, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, murmuring bitterly through his closed teeth: "Yet she never can be mine!"

Deep, deep and gloomy were his meditations after; and more than one hour passed by ere he moved a single muscle; till, at length, he heard a step, and a voice speaking without; and, starting up, he strove to clear his brow, brushing back the hair from his forehead, and looking grave, but not so sad. The key was turned in the door; and the next moment, two faces, that he knew well, presented themselves, those of Herbert and William Lovet.

Herbert stayed not long. "For the first time in life, Master Grey," he said, "I have petitioned to be a gaoler; but I have so much to thank you for, that I might well undertake that office on your behalf, to soften, as much as possible, your captivity, which will not be long, I trust. My thanks and my plans of all kinds must have greater room than I will now give to them, as your cousin is here to talk with you; but I will see you again ere the day be over, and, in the mean time, provide for your comfort, as far as may be. So fare-you-well for the present;" and, shaking him warmly by the hand, he turned to Lovet, saying: "The guard without knows your person, and will give you exit when you require it. You can come hither as often as you like during the day; but after sunset the gates of the tower, by the Elector's orders, must be closed against all visitors."

"Thanks, colonel, thanks," answered Lovet, and gazed after him to the door, ere he spoke to his cousin. The opening of his conversation was as strange as usual; for he began with a loud burst of laughter.

"Caged, Algernon, caged!" he exclaimed. "Well, upon my life, a mighty pretty dungeon, and convenient! Velvet chairs, upon my life; and a ravishing prospect, as poets would call it. Good soup, a bottle of rich wine, and bread not too brown, and, methinks, you are comfortably provided for. On my life, I am greatly indebted to the Elector."

"You seem to enjoy his bounty towards me, certainly," answered Algernon Grey, with a slight touch of bitterness; "may I know, William, whether it is from kindly sympathy with my pleasures, or from personal satisfaction, you derive your merriment?"

"Oh, personal, personal!" exclaimed Lovet.

"That celebrated cardinal, the son of a butcher, and master of monarchs, bright Walsey, was a frank and sincere man; and when he wrote '*ego et rex meus*,' he only did what every other man would do, if he were not a hypocrite, namely, put himself first, that is to say, the place which he occupied in his own consideration. I love you second to myself, dear Algernon. Don't tell sweet Madame de Laussitz, or her deep sleepy eyes would flash with indignation, to think that I loved any thing or any body, but her fair self; however, can you deny that I have great obligations to the Elector? Here he has caged my bird, just as I thought it was about to take flight, and that I should be obliged to follow. It answers my purpose just as well as if you had fallen in love with all the ladies of the court together, and stayed philandering in orange bowers. As to yourself, from what I know of you, the Elector's prison will be much more pleasant than Cupid's chain; and, on my life, he has put the jewel in a very snug cas-

ket. Here you are, like a poor simple Catholic girl's new crucifix, wrapped up in cotton, and laid upon a shelf, all safe and sheltered; while I, like the same poor maiden, go wandering at large in my worldly vanities."

"Take care, William," answered Algernon Grey, "that your vanities don't get you into worse than this."

"Heaven and earth listen to the man!" exclaimed William Lovet, laughing. "Think of his preaching decorum to me. Did I not tell you long ago, Algernon, that your vices were much more serious ones than mine? Here, instead of bowing down and worshipping the embroidered hem of some fair lady's petticoat, the very first thing you do in a strange country is, to go and cut a poor man's throat. Now, I will ask you fairly and candidly, which is the worst, to amuse an hour or two in giving and receiving pleasure, or to spend your time, like a wild cat in a holly bush, scratching your neighbour's heart out? The thing won't bear an argument, cousin of mine; I am the moral and well-regulated young man; and you are the reprobate."

"I only cut another man's throat, as you call it, William, in defence of my own life," replied Algernon Grey; "but, methinks, of all men you should be the last to find fault with such a transaction. Methinks I have heard of some six or seven of such affairs upon your hands."

"Ay, but I never begin with fighting," answered Lovet; "when driven to such extremities, I can't help it. I always commence with love and affection; and, if it end with hate and naked rapiers, it is no fault of mine. And so you pinked this Obertraut! Why you deserve thanks for that, too. Really it was a public service; if he die, there will be one bubble less upon the stream of the world; and if he recover, the bleeding and the lesson will do him an immense deal of good. 'Tis a pity it was not in the spring; for that is the time, the doctors say, to let blood."

"Pray, do not jest upon the subject, my good cousin," answered Algernon Grey; "I went unwillingly on a quarrel not of my own seeking; I did what I scarcely judged right to save my honour; and I bitterly regret that I was forced to wound a gentleman, who was too skilful a swordsman to be disarmed. Let us talk of other things."

"Pooh!" said Lovet, "he is a coxcomb, and deserved it. If you had not done it, I would have done it for you.—But to talk of other things, as you say. The Elector can certainly mean you no harm by assigning you so pleasant a place for imprisonment. When you have got up your clothes and a few books, you will be as comfortable here as at the inn with a sprained ankle—more so; for you will want the pain. Then, my dear Algernon, you will be out of all temptation, which is a great thing in your case. Here you can neither drink, nor swear, nor game, nor make love; in short, you are now physically in the state, to which you reduce yourself morally, and are cut off from all the little pleasures of life by that door, instead of a puritanical spirit.—I could make myself very comfortable here myself, but for one thing. I have often thought, as I like to try every sort of emotion in this world, that I

would make myself a voluntary prisoner for a few days, only I could never determine upon the gaol."

"And pray what is the one thing wanting in this sweet place?" asked Algernon Grey; "the one thing I want is liberty, but, I suppose, that is not what you mean?"

"Oh, dear, no," cried Lovet, "I mean woman's company; I should want something sadly to play with, to tease, to irritate, and to amuse myself with, like a petted child, and then to soothe her with soft caresses, and look into her liquid eyes, half full of tears, half light. Liberty, pooh! liberty is nothing. I would sell myself for a sequin to a Turk, if he would but engage to imprison me in his harem. But, on my life! if I were shut up for any of my small misdeemeanors in a prison, I would get some fair girl or another to come and entertain me at any price, were it but the gaoler's fat daughter."

Thus went he on for well nigh an hour, with gay, light, apparently thoughtless talk; but yet it was all calculated to produce a certain impression; and it must not be denied that, in a degree, it did so. He did so. He never mentioned the name of Agnes Herbert; he never alluded to her in the most remote manner; he spoke not of his cousin's gallant conduct on the preceding night; he seemed to be ignorant of all that had taken place, except the duel and the arrest. But yet his conversation turned Algernon's thoughts to Agnes, and made him long for her society. His words called up a pleasant dream of how she might cheer his hours of imprisonment, how, under other circumstances, she might make the sad and weary day the sweetest and the brightest of his life. He gave himself up to the dream, too: as there was no substantial source of pleasure, he fancied he might as well console himself from the stores of imagination; and on her his thoughts rested, fondly, tenderly, even while his cousin remained with him.

Lovet marked well the effect he produced; the meditative look, the occasional absence of mind, the random answer, and a sigh that once broke forth; and, when he thought he had succeeded sufficiently, he rose to go. "Well, Algernon," he said, "what shall I send you up?—clothes, books, and an instrument of music by the hands of a pretty maid, if I can find one. They tell me, you must not have your man; but the category did not include the fair sex; and, unless they are barbarians, they will let you have a *femme-de-chambre*, though they exclude a valet.—Come, come, do not look so grave. I must go and pay my devotions, but first will despatch all that you may require. Leave it to me, I will make a good selection, never fear; and your little coxcomb, Frill, shall carry them all hither, and see if they will let him stay to tend upon you. Whatever be their rules and regulations, if they view him justly, he can fall under none of them; for Heaven only knows what class the little devil belongs to; I am only certain that he is neither man, woman, nor child."

"Well, send him at all events," answered Algernon Grey; "it would be convenient if they let him stay. Send a lute, too, if you can find one in the town."

"A lute!" exclaimed Lovet. "On my life! the man will fall in love at last, if it be but by twanging catgut to his own sweet voice. To think, that two pieces of white board, strung with the entrails of a tame tiger, should give a reasonable creature, full of intellect as he thinks himself, the best consolation in adversity, is a sort of marvel—a lute! Heaven bless the mark!—Well, you shall have a lute, if it be but to make you commit a folly for once in your life, and sing soft ditties to a certain spot in the ceiling. Adieu, cousin, adieu! I will see you again to-morrow."

"Bring me news of this young baron's state, if you can get them," said Algernon Grey.

"Happy for him, I am not his physician," answered Lovet; and thus saying he left the room.

When he was gone, the prisoner relapsed into thought again; but he had found out, or at least his cousin's words had suggested, a new source of pleasant meditations. They were dangerous ones, it must be owned—those sweet alluring fancies that lead us along far, much farther than we think, with steps as light as if the foot rested upon clouds. It was weak, but it was very natural so to give way. For long, long hours there was no occupation for his mind. The choice, if it could be called a choice, was between dark and gloomy broodings over a bitter point in his fate, and sad anticipations of the future, or an unreal dream of happiness, which could hardly, by any possibility, be verified; but yet presented itself to fancy at every moment, whenever thought was left free to roam, unrestrained by a powerful will. Is it wonderful that he grew weary of the struggle? Is it surprising that more and more he gave way to the bright deceptions of a warm, eager heart, and quick imagination? Is it to be marvelled at, that in the dull hours of solitude, he turned from the gloomy pictures presented by reason and memory, to gaze upon the glowing pageantry of fancy and hope? Ah, no! And so constituted mentally and corporally, so situated in the past and in the present, few, very few men on earth would be found to resist more than he resisted, to do otherwise than he did. He yielded his heart to the only comfort it could receive, he yielded his mind to the only thoughts that were bright; and, though his stern resolve to do all that was right maintained its sway, yet the traitors of our peace were busily undermining, in secret, the defences of the castle in which he trusted.

He made Agnes Herbert the companion of his thoughts. He saw her with the mind's eye; the tones of her sweet voice came back to his ear melodiously; the glance of her clear, soft eye, with all its tempored brightness, seemed upon him again; the very memory of her grace and beauty brought sunshine with it, as sometimes, when we shut our eyes in the darkness of the night, resplendent scenes come back to sight, all vivid and distinct, as if they were painted in light upon our closed eyelids. He made a happiness for himself where none other was to be found; and if it was a weakness, he remembered he was but man.

Nothing was, indeed, wanting to mere corporal comfort, except freedom. A well-served table was provided for him; one of the Elector's

servants attended to all that could lighten his captivity; his clothes, some books, and a lute were brought up in the course of the day; and a small hand-bell was placed upon a table that he might have the means of summoning attendance when he needed it. His page, indeed, was not admitted, and no one visited his chamber after the hour of dinner, but once when he rang. His thoughts, however, had by this time chosen their own course. He read little, he touched not the instrument of music; but, seated near the window, he gazed out, and thought, while wandering slowly round to the west, the bright summer sun presented the scene beneath in the same warm light of evening which had flooded valley and plain, and gilt mountain and castle, when last he had seen it with Agnes Herbert. Her image mingled with the whole, and the prospect was not the less sweet to his eyes for the association with which memory enriched the view.

CHAPTER XV.

The sun set; the beams of the departed orb spread up from behind the mountains of the Haardt over the whole wide expanse of the cloudless heaven; and, from the golden verge of the horizon to the glowing crimson of the zenith, a broad sheet of varied colouring stretched unbroken, hue melting into hue, so that the eye could not detect where one tint blended with another. It changed, too, with each passing minute; the golden verge grew red; blue mingled with the crimson overhead; then came a shade of grey; and then looked out a star, like hope to cheer the heart on the departure of some past bygone joy. At length the grey twilight succeeded to the warm sunset; and stream, and valley, and mountain, and plain grew faint and soft under the prisoner's sight; while his chamber became full of shadows; and many of the bright fancies which had cheered the day, passed away with the declining light, as if they had been the creatures of the sunshine.

His thoughts were becoming gloomy, when suddenly he heard the key turn in the lock, and then a light knock at the door.

"Come in!" he cried; and the next moment it was opened. But Algernon Grey could scarcely believe his eyes; for in the dim light he saw a woman's form and garments; and heart, more than sight, told him who it was.

Starting up with a quick and joyful movement, he advanced to meet her; but Agnes only entered a few steps, and that with an air of timid hesitation.

"My uncle has sent me to you," she said, giving him her hand, as he came near; "and I am very glad indeed to have any means of showing my gratitude for all that you have done for me. It is but little that I can do, but still a walk in the quiet evening air will refresh and calm you; and I trust," she added, laying the tips of her small taper fingers on his arm, "that it may tend to soothe the indignation which, I am sure, you must feel at the treatment you have received."

"Indeed, dear lady," answered Algernon Grey, "I feel none."

"Then I feel it for you," answered Agnes, warmly; "I should feel more, indeed, did I not know that it is all weakness, rather than injustice. They fear that fierce old man and his rash son, otherwise this would not have taken place; and for that reason it is that I am obliged to take this unfit hour to give you whatever little liberty I can;—but you must promise me," she added, in a timid and imploring tone, "to return when it is time. My uncle told me to exact such an engagement. He could not come himself; for he has been all the evening with the Elector on business of importance, planning new defences to the place; and so he made me your gaoler—sad, yet pleasant task. But you will return, will you not?"

Algernon Grey took her hand again and pressed it in his own. "Whenever you wish it," he replied.

"Nay, not when I wish it," answered Agnes; "that would never be; for, could my wishes avail aught, you would not be here at all."

"Well, then, when you ask me," said the young gentleman.

"No, not so either," she replied; "I should never have the heart to ask you. Even in my youngest and most thoughtless days, I could not make a prisoner of a poor bird. How much less, then, of one who has saved my life. I value freedom too much to do so. It must be for you to decide. You shall return when it is right, and you shall be the judge."

"I will, then," answered Algernon Grey; "and now let us forth, for I confess I feel the air of imprisonment very heavy; and the lock of yonder door, which my fair turnkey has left unguardedly open, is a chain upon my spirits."

"No, not unguardedly," replied Agnes; "I was quite sure that, for my sake, you would not take a step beyond without permission, when I came to see you. Oh, I know you right well, noble sir. Your conduct to me last night was a whole history; I need no farther insight."

"Indeed," said Algernon Grey, taking his hat from the table as she moved a step or two towards the door; "if you know my history, it is a somewhat strange one; but still I think you read it right if you judge that in nothing I would abuse your trust."

"I am sure of it," she said, leading the way into the ante-room.

Two guards were seated there on duty; but the lady's presence seemed a passport; and they made no opposition to the prisoner's exit, only rising as he and Agnes passed.

The moment that the top of the stairs was reached, however, a change seemed to come over the fair girl's demeanour. So long as she had been in the apartments of the prisoner, a timid sort of hesitation seemed to hang about her, restraining her words and even her movements; but the instant she had passed the door of his prison, her heart and spirit seemed unchained again.

"Not down there, not down there," she cried; "you are ignorant of the castle and its manifold turnings and windings. I will lead you through it, and try to cheer you by the way; here, turn to the left;" and taking her way along a narrow passage, through the tall windows of which streamed a pale and uncertain light, she walked on, till a short staircase

of five or six steps led them down to a broad balcony, running along the face of the western part of the building, and looking down into the court. Here she paused for a moment, and Algernon Grey took his place by her side, gazing thoughtfully at the number of servants and officers who were still crossing and re-crossing the open space below, like so many ants on their busy labours.

"This castle and the sights that it presents," said Agnes, after a moment's meditation, "always make me more or less thoughtful at every moment when one has time for thought. There, on the right, is what they call the Rupert's building, the oldest part of the castle, it is said; and I know not why, but I cannot look at its ornamented windows, and rich arches, without thinking of all the changes that have taken place in this small spot since it was raised. See, how busily they go along, and how gaily, too, as if there had never been any others before or would come others after."

"And they are right," answered Algernon Grey. "Why should men lose the happiness of the moment by thinking of its short duration? A certain portion of life only is given to each human being; and so to enjoy that portion that our acts shall stain no part with regret, nor lay up store of vengeance against us, is, methinks, the wisest policy, as well as the truest religion."

"And do you think so, too?" exclaimed Agnes, turning suddenly towards him with a bright smile; "I am glad of it; for sometimes I am inclined, when I have heard a grave discourse of worldly vanities and mortal pleasures, to think myself no better than a butterfly or a bird, because I am so happy in my little day of sunshine. We have men here, who speak so hardly of the brevity of mortal existence, that I cannot but think that they feel dissatisfied so small a portion is allowed them."

"When I hear such men," answered Algernon Grey, "and there are many of them all over the world, they leave a very different impression on my mind from that which they expect to produce. They can have very little confidence in an everlasting future, who dwell so mournfully over the shortness of the present. To enjoy God's blessings, and, from the heart, to thank Him for all, is to honour Him by the best sacrifice we can offer—at least, so it seems to me; and we may be right sure that, when we can thank Him from the heart, we have not enjoyed amiss."

"I think so too," answered Agnes; "at all events, I know one thing, that though I would strive to bear all misfortunes without repining, yet, when I am happy, I ever feel the most grateful sense at the goodness and mercy of God. But let us come on; and mark that building there, that one with the stony escutcheon on the front; you can scarcely see it, I think, in this dim light; but some day I will tell you a story about it. It is too sad a one for to-night. Let us pass down here; and then, turning to the left again, I will lead you through the chapel."

As the way was now broader than before, Algernon Grey drew his fair companion's arm through his own, turning as she directed him; and, but for that light touch and that sweet

companionship, his walk might have been gloomy enough; for the light faded rapidly as they went on. The long dim passage seemed damp and chilly, even in that summer evening. The moon had not yet risen, but there was sufficient light in the sky to throw deeper shadows from the columns of masonry upon the faint grey gleam that still illuminated the halls and corridors in the neighbourhood of the front casements. Agnes, however, was near him. Her hand rested gently on his arm; her eyes were turned to his from time to time, as if seeking the expression which gave point to his words. And Algernon Grey was happy; for he felt as if the dreams he had been indulging were realized; and yet he knew at his heart, that the realization was little better than a dream likewise. But he would not give way to sad thoughts; for he remembered that he should have time for plenty of them in his captivity; and the new philosophy, to which he had given way, taught him to enjoy.

"Shall we see our way across the chapel?" said Agnes, at length, pushing open a small door at the end of a long small passage after descending a few steps, and looking into a wide and splendid aisle beyond.

"Oh yes," cried Algernon Grey, "there is plenty of light;" and, taking a step forward, he led her in. The air was very dim; but yet he could see that, except the architectural decorations, the building was destitute of all ornament.

There is something, however, in the very atmosphere of a place destined for the purposes of prayer, which brings a feeling of awe and solemn meditation upon one. Here the petitions of thousands have ascended day after day to the throne of grace. Here the Almighty has promised to be present "in the midst of the two or three who seek Him faithfully;" here have been all the struggles that bare themselves before the Almighty eye; here the consolation and the hope derived from the pure source of Almighty beneficence. A crowd of grand associations, of mercies sought and benefits received, rush upon the mind and fill it with devotion.

Algernon Grey felt it strongly then, as, with that fair being by his side, whom he had protected, comforted, saved—whom he loved, in spite of reason, in spite of resolution, in spite of every effort,—he walked slowly up the nave, till he stood with her before the altar.

Then what thoughts were they that came thick upon his mind? What memories, what visions! dark and bright mingling together, black as night and brilliant as the dawn! Whatever were the emotions in Agnes's heart, her hand slowly fell from his arm, and he suffered it to drop. How or why, he knew not; but by an impulse, gentle, yet irresistible, he took it in his; and there they stood for a moment before that altar, hand in hand. He felt his fingers clasping upon hers more tightly; and, afraid of himself, of his own heart, of his own fate, he drew her arm once more through his and led her to an open door, through which a faint gleam was streaming, with a deep, heavy sigh.

There was a lamp in the passage beyond; and, by its light, they passed through the north-

ern mass of the building, and mounted the steps to the Altan. The stars were shining forth in exceeding splendour; each bright spot in Charles's wane twinkling like a living diamond in the deep blue sky; and the small pole-star glistening high above, fixed and immovable, like a constant mind, while the others whirled round it in never-ceasing change.

"Ay, this feels like freedom, indeed," said Algernon Grey. "I know not how it is, dear lady, but the sensation of liberty is never so strong upon me, as in one of these bright clear nights. During the day there is a sort of oppressive bondage in the world, and the world's thoughts and doings in the busy multitudes that float about, in the very hum of tongues, and the sight of moving masses of mankind, that seems to cramp and confine the spirit within us. But here, with that profound, unlimited vault above, the wide air all around, and the far-off stars twinkling at immeasurable distances through space, the heart has room to beat; and the soul, upon the wings of thought, wanders unfettered through the infinite creation."

"I love not crowds either," answered Agnes; "and yet it is pleasant to me that I have my fellow-creatures near—perhaps it is a woman's feeling, springing from her weakness; but still I would rather not be free, if I were to be all alone on earth. Not that I do not often love solitude, and to be free from the multitude; but still, a wild ramble over a mountain top, or a gallop over a wide open moor, is enough for my small range; and, like the lark, after I have taken my flight and sung my song, I am ever ready to fold my wings and sink to earth again."

The image pleased her companion; he thought it very like her; and in such conversation passed well nigh an hour, till the round edge of the yellow moon was seen rising above the fringed forest, and spreading new lustre over the sky.

"Here comes our fair and bountiful companion of last night," said Algernon Grey; "I will see her rise into the sky before I go; but then, to show how moderate and discreet I am, and encourage you to give me some more hours of liberty hereafter, I will tell my fair gaoler, that I am ready to return to my prison."

"Strange," said Agnes, looking up in his face with a smile, and leaning a little more heavily upon his arm, "strange that it is I who must ask the prisoner to remain at large for a while; but you know not that you have a visit this night to make to one, who will thank you for Agnes Herbert's sake, for all you did last night."

"Your uncle?" asked Algernon Grey.

"No," replied Agnes; "it is to a lady, a kind and noble one, the Electress Louisa; she is anxious to see you, and bade me bring you to her whenever I hear her bell ring. It will not be long first; there she sits in that room, where the lights are shining through the open windows; and when she thinks that the bustle of the day is fully over in the castle, she will give us notice."

"She loves you much, I doubt not," answered Algernon Grey. "'Tis strange to find here one of my own fair countrywomen, domiciled in a different land, and so linked with a foreign race. There can be no relationship, surely, between you and this Palatine house!"

"The Electress calls me cousin," answered Agnes with a smile, at the half-put question; "but it is not so; I am not her cousin. Mine is a strange history, my noble deliverer; but, doubtless, every one's is strange, if we knew it all—yours, perhaps, as well as mine."

"Most strange," answered Algernon Grey; "and if we meet often, I must tell it to you—yes, I will," he repeated in a low murmur, as if speaking to himself; but then added, "not now, not now, I cannot tell it now."

"Whatever it is," said Agnes, "I am sure it will show naught but honour and high deeds on your part—I have had proofs of it; and as you, like other men, have mingled in the world, your story will be, doubtless, one of action; while mine is more the history of my race than of myself, for I have done naught and suffered little in this life; spoiled by kind friends; supported, protected, and left to follow my own will—often, perhaps, a wayward one; reversed, as yet, I have not known; no strong emotions, either of grief or joy, have visited my breast; and the part of life already gone has lapsed away like a morning dream in pleasant but faint images, scarce worthy the remembrance. You shall tell me your history, if you will; but I cannot promise yet to be as sincere, mine being, as I have said, the history of others rather than my own."

"I will tell mine, nevertheless," answered Algernon Grey. "It were better that one, at least, should know it."

As he spoke, they heard a bell ring; and Agnes exclaimed, "That is the signal of the Electress, now come with me;" and, leading the way into the castle again, she ascended a long spiral staircase in one of the small towers, and then, proceeding along a well lighted corridor, she passed the top of a flight of steps, exactly opposite to a large door surmounted with a gilt coronet, and entered a small room on the right, where, to the right again, was seen another door apparently leading into the chamber, one entrance of which they had already passed. Here Agnes paused and knocked; and a sweet voice from within instantly answered, "Come in, dear child." The lady then opened the door, and beckoning to Algernon Grey to follow, advanced into the room, which I have already described as the scene of Agnes's interview with the Electress Dowager in the morning.

With a calm and stately step, and his fine thoughtful eyes bent forward on the face of the Electress, Algernon Grey came after his fair conductress at the distance of a few steps. Louisa Juliana gazed at him steadily for an instant, and then bent her head with a dignified air, as Agnes presented him to her.

"Be seated, sir," she said, pointing to a chair near; "and you, my sweet cousin, come either beside me; here is your accustomed place."

Algernon Grey took the seat she assigned him; and, leaning his arm with easy grace over the back, he turned partly towards the Electress, whilst she proceeded to say, "I have first, sir, to thank you for your gallant, I might almost call it, heroic conduct last night, in saving the life of my sweet cousin here, who is as dear to me as if she were my child. Accept them, therefore, I beg, and believe me, it is with pain I find my son has thought himself called upon

to deprive you of your liberty for a less fortunate event."

"I merit no thanks, your Highness," answered Algernon Grey; "I have but done that which any man of good breeding, not a coward, would do in similar circumstances; nor can I even claim the lady's gratitude; for when I went to give her aid, I really knew not who she was. I will not deny, indeed, that the pleasure of the act was more than doubled, when I found who was the object of it; but surely, a thing which affords such great satisfaction to the giver, deserves no thanks from the receiver. 'Tis done for his own pleasure; and his own pleasure be his reward."

"It would be a harsh doctrine on any other lips but yours," replied the Electress Dowager, while Agnes shook her head with a smile; "nor can I admit," continued Louisa Juliana, "that every man of good breeding, not a coward, would do the same. I fear much, my noble young friend, that, pick all the world, you would not find ten such. We have a sad proof of it—you were the only one who went to her rescue."

"I was more near than any one," answered Algernon Grey; "so, still, that is no title, lady; however, I am well pleased it has been as it is."

"The men who do best service," answered the Electress, "are always those who require least thanks. I have found it so through life. But now I have other things to speak of."

Agnes rose as if she would have withdrawn; but the Electress stopped her, saying, "Stay, stay, my child; you shall be of our counsel; I know that I can trust you."

Agnes repeated herself in silence, but looked somewhat anxiously to the face of Algernon Grey, with feelings upon which we must pause for a moment. She was a very young diplomatist. She had not learned the art of that craft, as it was practised in those days—I trust less in the present—and she was not aware, that to deceive a friend or benefactor, to lead one who has aided and assisted us, into a dangerous and difficult position, is a stroke of skill, and not a mark of baseness. A sudden doubt came over her, lest the questions which the Electress was about to put—lest even the visit to her apartments might be painful and unpleasant to him who had ventured life to save her; and, though she saw not how she could have escaped from such a task, she was very sorry that she had undertaken it. After one brief glance then, she withdrew her eyes, and remained gazing at some objects on the table, till the voice of the Electress, speaking after a somewhat long pause, roused her, and she listened.

"You have come from England, sir, very lately, I think," said Louisa Juliana, fixing her eyes upon Algernon Grey.

"Not so, your Highness," replied the young gentleman; "I have been absent from my native land, now, for several years, frequenting the various courts of Europe, and studying the manners of other nations. On my return I received letters at Genoa, which made me resolve to remain some time longer out of England; but I have not seen aught of it for nearly five years."

"Methinks you are very young," said the Electress, "to be such a traveller; doubtless you have forgotten all about the court of England."

"Oh, no," replied Algernon Grey; "I may be older than I seem; but certainly was not young enough when I departed, to forget aught that was worth remembering."

"'Tis a strange court," continued Louisa Juliana; "and yet, to say truth, all courts are strange. Do you know the king?"

The question was somewhat abrupt; but the young Englishman replied immediately: "Oh, yes, I know him well, without being one of the menials, or the favourites of the court."

"And, doubtless, have been trusted by him!" rejoined the Electress, in a sort of catechising tone—"he is a wise and witty monarch."

"I know not any mark of trust that he has ever given me," replied Algernon Grey; "and his courtiers give him right good cause to be witty as well as to be vain. I have always remarked, that where there is much of this lip-service there is little real loyalty, and that downfalls are preceded by the most servile adulation of power. I trust it may not be so in our day."

"You doubt it," replied the Electress; "and it may be so; for I always doubt it, too. This court is full of flatterers as well as yours. They would persuade my son that he is a god, as they persuade yours that he is a Solomon. Fortunately, fate holds out no offer to King James of another crown; and even if it did, he would never stretch forth a hand to reach it. Here we are in a different position. The diadem of Bohemia, which beyond all doubt will be offered to the Elector in a few days, will find, I fear, a more ambitious candidate, and one who may not calculate so well the means to the end."

Algernon Grey was silent; for he felt that the subject was a difficult one to speak upon; but, after waiting for a few moments, the Electress added: "What say you, is it not so?"

"Really, your Highness, I cannot answer," replied her visitor; "I have never spoken with the Elector on the subject—I have only seen him once."

Louisa Juliana gazed at him steadfastly, and then said, with a smile: "Come, come, Master Grey, let us be candid with each other. Thus stands the case. The Elector is wealthy, powerful in his own dominions, doubtless a wise and warlike Prince, but at the same time to grasp a crown requires a ruthlessness which he does not possess. What is the Palatinate pitted against the Empire? What can give even the seeming of success to such a struggle, except potent and immediate foreign aid.—Will your king give it, Master Grey?"

"Really, your Highness, I cannot tell," answered Algernon, a good deal surprised at the lady's tone.

"Methinks not," continued Louisa Juliana. "He is a wise and most pacific king; wasting in subtleties those powers of mind, and in pagantry and revelling those vast material resources, which are most needful to keep a turbulent and energetic people under even wholesome rule, which, wisely employed, would be successful, but which, thus foolishly squandered, will leave a debt that naught but the best blood in the land can wipe out.—Forgive me, Master Grey, that I thus speak of your sovereign; but see, what does he do now in my

son's case? What energy, what activity does he display in behalf of his own child?

"But, small, I fear, madam," answered Algernon Grey; "but, perhaps, if he see danger menace, he may do more.—However, I know so little of the court of England, that I have no right to form a judgment."

Louisa Juliana shook her head: "You are a diplomatist," she said; "and for so young a one, a wise one; for I have heard that the chief skill of that intricate art consists in three negatives: 'Not to know more than enough; not to say more than enough; and not to see more than enough.'"

"Indeed, your Highness does me wrong," replied the young Englishman; "I belong to no such base craft; for I cannot hold the task of deceiving to be aught than dishonourable, the task of concealing aught but pitiful. I am no diplomatist, I can assure you; not even of that better kind, who, like the great Duke of Solly, make it their boast to frustrate dishonest craft by wise honesty."

"Then you are greatly mistaken here," replied the Electress Dowager; "for every one thinks you have been sent over by King James to see how the land lies, and give advice or promise of assistance accordingly."

Algernon Grey laughed: "Your Highness will pardon me," he said; "but I beseech you to believe me, when I tell you, that, a mere boy when I quitted the court of England, I am recollected there by friends and enemies, kings and statesmen, but as a mere boy still."

"Hush!" cried the Electress, raising her hand; "some one knocks. See who it is, my Agnes. I thought we should be free from interruption."

Agnes Herbert ran lightly to the great doors, opened them partly, and, after speaking a few words to some one without, closed them and returned, saying in a low voice; "The Elector, madam, with the counsellor Camerarius, is coming up, and has sent forward a page to say he wishes to confer with you."

"He must not be found here," cried the Electress, looking at Algernon Grey; "quick, take him into my dressing-room; then, when you hear that they are all arrived, lead him down by the great staircase and away out upon the Altan.—Quick, Agnes, quick!—Adieu, Master Grey; we will talk farther another night."

With a sign to him whom we now may well call her lover, Agnes ran to the small door to the left of the Electress, exactly opposite to that by which they had entered, and threw it open. All was dark beyond; but Algernon Grey, though he was not fond of such secrecy, followed the fair girl with an inclination to the Electress Dowager; and, drawing the door gently to behind them, Alice took his hand, saying: "I will guide you; but we must open this other door a little to know when they pass;" and, advancing a step or two, she opened a chink of a door, which seemed to lead out upon the great corridor at the top of the stairs.

In a moment or two after, they heard footsteps and a voice speaking, which Algernon Grey recollected well as that of the Elector. They heard the great doors thrown open and

closed again; and then the young Englishman whispered:—"We can go now, I think."

"Hush!" said Agnes; "there is some one going down the steps." The next instant a round, fat, but somewhat cracked voice was heard to exclaim:—"So you have caged the birds, Joachim—now let us wait here and watch till they take flight again; and I will instruct thee in the science of courts."

"More likely to instruct one in the science of pottle pots and great tuns," answered a younger voice.

"It is the fool and the page," said Agnes, "waiting on the landing five or six steps down. How shall we get out?"

"Cannot we go by the staircase which led us hither?" rejoined Algernon Grey.

"We must cross the top of the great staircase," answered Agnes; "and they can see up to the very door. We had better wait where we are—hark! they are speaking in the other room; we must keep as still as death."

Algernon Grey made no reply, but remained standing close beside her; and in the silence they preserved, a great part of the double conversation that went on, both in the chamber of the Electress Dowager, and on the landing of the stairs was distinctly audible to the ears of the young pair. A part, indeed, was lost, or conveyed very little meaning; but what was heard, for some time, made a strange medley of ceremonious courtesy and broad vulgarity, questions of policy and absurd jest. Sometimes this strange cross reading read epigrammatically, sometimes gave the most strange counter-sense; and it was difficult to ascertain at all times whence the voices proceeded, so as to know whether the reply was addressed to the sentence just gone before, or the one that preceded and had been lost.

"I know right well, counsellor Camerarius, what are your opinions, and on what they are founded," were the first words audible. But immediately a merry but coarse voice said:—

"Eleven bottles of sack a day, a gold chain and a fool's cap, are no things to be lightly respected, Master Joachim."

"But hear me, your Highness," said another voice, "you, I know, are always amenable to reason, and you must not prejudice me, nor suppose that I am biassed by ordinary motives."

"If what fool a thinks were to guide men of reason," said another tongue; "a fool's cap and bells would be as good as the crown of Bohemia."

"We must discuss this question, dearest mother, without passion or prejudice," said the voice of the Elector; "great interests are at stake, your son's, the Protestant religion, the liberty of Germany."

"The great tun of Heidelberg brimful of wine," exclaimed the juicy tongue of the jester, "would not drown the gabbling of a page; he would still shout from the bottom of the vat and make empty bubbles on the top, as full of noise as a petard."

"Nothing more is wanting to shatter the whole constitution of this empire," Camerarius was heard to say, "than disunion amongst the Protestant princes, the fall of that kingdom which has first raised the voice against tyranny, oppression, and superstition, and the rejection

of a proffered crown by the only sovereign prince who is qualified to guide the march of events by power, talent, and influence."

"Give me reason and a good supper," said the page.

"But have you an offer thereof?" asked the Electress.

"If I had the rule, you should have none," said the jester, "but a good whipping and a book to read."

"The sceptre of Bohemia."

"A fig for your bauble."

"A coxcomb against a page's feather."

"At the feet of your Highness's son, with all the advantages, which—"

"The König's-stool and the Heiligberg upon your head for a mad ape; you have untrussed my jerkin and let my fat out."

"No motives of personal ambition, no hope or expectation of renown, nay, not even the voice of an oppressed people would induce me, dearest mother."

"Though the gods and goddesses were to come down upon earth to wash themselves in the fountains of the gardens, you would still be an ass, and drink deep to the increase of your carcass, and the perdition of your soul."

"Notwithstanding which the voice of the people of Bohemia is not to go for nothing; and, when added to that, is the maintenance of the Protestant religion in merely its just rights and liberties."

"A horse and varlet with legs like a blacksmith's tongs; feet like the ace of diamonds, and shoulders vastly too intimate with his ears."

"Those who could advise the prince to give a decided refusal to such an appeal—"

But here Algernon Grey called off the attention of his fair companion from the curious conversation which they overheard, by gently touching her hand and saying, "Methinks, we must listen to this no longer, sweet lady."

"How can we avoid it?" answered Agnes in a whisper. "To close either of the doors now, would be worse than to risk and go boldly down the stairs."

"Then let us go boldly," answered Algernon Grey. "It were better to risk anything personally, methinks, than to overhear what is evidently not intended for our ears."

"You are right," said Agnes, "you are right—I only feared—but no matter for personal fears; they shall not stop me from doing what I ought. Let us come, then;" and advancing a step, she opened the door upon the corridor and went out.

There was a large lamp suspended opposite to the door of the Electress Dowager, casting a full light upon the stairs. In the corner of the landing leaning with one leg cast over the other, was a fat, short, red-faced man, dressed in the motley garb of the fools of those days; while, opposite to him, lolling against the balustrade, was a lad of some sixteen or seventeen years of age, habited in the splendid costume of the Electoral pages. Advancing straight towards them and descending the stairs with a calm countenance, Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert passed on side by side. The page moved and drew himself up, doffing his bonnet as they went by; but the jester, with the usual license of his calling, remained in his corner

unmoved, shutting one eye and fixing the other keen grey orb upon the lady with an inquisitive stare. The moment she and her companion had passed, however, he stuck his tongue into his cheek and winked knowingly to the page, who replied merely by a low laugh.

"What will come of it, Master Joachim?" asked the jester, after a pause.

"Nay, I know not," replied the youth; "love and marriage, I suppose."

"Nay, love won't come," said the jester; "for he is there already; and marriage may come, or may not, as the gods will have it; but if I were pretty Mrs. Agnes Herbert, I would take that long fellow to the buttery, and give him a toast and two or three bottles of Burgundy wine. She is afraid of doing so, for fear of being found out; but, methinks, it would be the seal of matrimony, which Heaven send her speedily; for the walking about in the passages of this old castle is somewhat like to chill the little god, Cupid's brother, who is known to be somewhat awish."

In the mean while Agnes and Algernon Grey walked on and passed through the lower part of the castle, and upon the Altan again. There she paused with a momentary hesitation; for she felt how sweet a thing liberty must be to her companion, and she could not find it in her heart to say that it was time to return to his prison. Did any personal feelings mingle with her reluctance? Was she unwilling to part with him so soon? Who ever felt a joy that was not grieved to lose it? and Agnes Herbert had been very happy by the side of Algernon Grey.

He saved her the pain of speaking, however, by divining her thoughts ere they were told.

"Methinks, dearest lady," he said, "that it must be time for me to return, and for you to go to other occupations, though your kind heart will not tell me so. Let us on towards my tower, however. My heartfelt thanks are due for the alleviation you have given me, and I would not for the world mingle one pain with the pleasure you must feel in such an act."

"My only pain," replied Agnes, walking on beside him, "is, that you must return at all. The Electress Dowager, I think, may call for me again, or I would say, stay longer."

They were not long ere they reached the foot of the stairs leading up to the place of Algernon's imprisonment; it seemed to him, indeed, marvellously short, and there he stopped to bid her farewell for the night. True, he might have done so as well above; but there the guards tenanted the antichamber, and feelings that he would not own to himself made him unwilling to have witnesses to his parting with her.

"Farewell, dear lady," he said, pressing her hand in his; "if you could tell the relief and pleasure you have afforded the poor prisoner, your heart would, I am sure, rejoice. Nay, I feel that it does, though you cannot know from experience how tedious the hours of captivity are. Thanks—a thousand thanks—for the solace of the free air, rendered trebly bright by your sweet company."

"You have no thanks to give," she answered, leaving her hand in his; "do I not owe you everything? and surely, a few hours from the

life you have saved is but a poor offering for a grateful heart to make. To-morrow night, at the same hour, I know I may promise to come again, and perhaps my uncle will come with me. Till then, I must bid you adieu. Sleep well; and pleasant dreams be yours."

He still held her hand for a moment—he still gazed upon that fair and beaming face by the pale light of the lamp that hung upon the staircase, and sensations he could hardly master rose in his bosom. They frightened him, and, breaking suddenly the spell that held him, he turned and mounted to the chamber, where sat the men on guard. There came another adieu, colder in seeming but not less warm in truth, and, entering, he himself closed the door. He heard her hand laid upon the key; but it did not turn, and the next instant her sweet voice reached his ear, somewhat trembling in tone, as she said to one of the guards—"Here, come and lock it—I cannot."

"Why, it goes as easy as a wheel," answered the man, advancing with a heavy step; and the next moment the door was locked.

Agnes trod her way back with a slow and thoughtful step towards the corridor of the apartments of the Electress Dowager; but at the foot of the stairs she met her uncle Herbert, and the keen eye of affection soon discovered that from some cause he was agitated, though he endeavored to maintain his usual equable mien.

"What is the matter?" she said, clinging to his arm; "you are disturbed—I see it in your eyes."

"'Tis nothing, my Agnes," he said, "nothing. So you have given your prisoner his little holiday. How did he comport himself?"

"He enjoyed it much," answered Agnes; "in his calm and serious manner, he showed as much pleasure as I hoped he would feel."

"Ay, but to you, my child," asked Herbert, "was there any difference this night?"

"Exactly the same as ever," replied the beautiful girl with a gay smile; "banish all fears and doubts. Indeed, indeed, you may. I thought they were gone for ever; for I know that such things linger not in your heart; and when once you trust, you trust implicitly. You may trust here—on him—on me; for not one word has ever passed our lips, that the whole world might not listen to."

"'Tis well!" said her uncle, thoughtfully, "'tis well—I do trust."

"Nay, but all is not well, I am sure," rejoined Agnes; "something has troubled you."

"Nothing but the words of a fool," answered Herbert; "and I am a fool for being troubled by them. Yet something must be done to set this matter right. Listen, dear one; I met just now, Master —, the Elector's droll. How is it that men of common sense can find delight in the malicious drivelling of a law-kittened knave like that? He spoke with mockery of my Agnes—said he had seen her taking love's walk, which is a crooked one, forth from the bed-chamber next the dowager Electress's hall, down to the pleasure gardens, and bade me look well to my pretty bird, as he called you. What more he said, I need not repeat. One cannot strike an idiot, or I had felled him."

Agnes laughed gaily. "Nay, nay," she said,

"he has but proved himself more fool than ever!"

"Laugh not, Agnes, in your young innocence," answered Herbert; "no woman's name must be lightly spotted. You know not, that the slightest foul mark upon a pure reputation remains for ever, breeding doubts and suspicions impossible to be removed. I'll tell you what, my child, I must have done; for it shall never be said, that with my will you ever did aught you were ashamed to acknowledge—you shall go to the Electress Dowager, and tell her the story; you shall petition for leave to speak the exact truth of how and why you were seen coming from that room with the prisoner. You will obtain it, I doubt not; but if she should refuse, I must speak to her myself; for this may rest a stain upon you, my child; and it must not be. So well do I know you, Agnes, that I say boldly and fearlessly, do anything you will, provided it be that which you can explain to the whole world, when it becomes necessary. But, at the same time, I warn you, dear one, never do aught that you cannot explain; for diplomacy is not a woman's trade; and, if it be dangerous in the hands of a man, it is fatal in those of a woman."

"I will go to the Electress, at once," answered Agnes; "for although, so far as I am personally concerned, I would scoff at all idle rumours, yet, were they to give you pain, it would be no matter to be scoffed at."

"Go, Agnes, go," rejoined Herbert. "It is better, both for you and for me; when you have once the power of explaining all, I care not for aught else. Idle rumours affect me not, Agnes; and fools may talk and babble as they please; but doubtful circumstances, unaccounted for, must not affect you, my child."

"I go, then," replied Agnes; and, mounting the stairs, she hurried to the apartments of the Electress Dowager.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was a lamp lighted in the chamber, to which Algernon Grey returned. He found the room neatly ordered, as if care and attention had been bestowed upon it; and, in a few minutes after his return, a servant entered, bearing materials for a meal, such as prisoners seldom taste. The man set it down and retired in silence; but Algernon Grey left the supper untouched. For nearly a quarter of an hour he strode up and down the room in deep thought; and then, breaking off suddenly, he said, "I will go to bed and sleep. What need of troubling my mind with things that may never occur? Am I to cast away every enjoyment of this mortal life, for fear of their remote consequences? No, I will guard my heart firmly; I will rule my conduct strictly; but I will not debar myself of my sole solace, lest it should become too sweet. I will go and sleep, and these gloomy visions will take their flight before the morning."

Accordingly, proceeding into the other room, he undressed and went to bed. Neither did sleep refuse to visit his eyelids; for there are few things more wearing and wearisome than the dull lapse of solitary hours to an active and

energetic mind : but his slumber was not calm ; it was not of that soft and balmy kind that visits the pillow of careless childhood ; nor was it chequered with those light gay dreams which hover over the bed of hopeful youth. Visions he had many ; but they were all more or less dark, all more or less troubled ; and the same forms and features were in each. Two female figures were ever present, and one was Agnes Herbert. But, as I have already touched this theme, I will not pause here to enter into the details of all that imagination and memory suggested to the sleeping brain. Suffice it, that he slept without repose ; and that agitated feelings, running masterless in unreasoning slumber, worn both body and mind, even during the hours of rest.

He woke on the following morning languid and unrefreshed ; and, if he lay down somewhat gloomy in his thoughts, the next morning found him sadder and less tranquil still.

The heavy hours rolled slowly on, and nothing occurred throughout the morning to break the dull monotony of his imprisonment. The servant brought in the meals, arranged the rooms, and showed towards him every sort of civility and attention. But still it was not there that Algernon Grey could find companionship ; and but few words passed, the young gentleman still speaking first, and receiving but brief and insignificant answers in return. The sight even of a human face, it is true, was pleasant to him ; but yet it seemed each time that the man came and went as if his momentary presence and quick departure but added to his heaviness of heart.

He longed for somebody with whom he could converse—any one, it mattered not who ; and he looked eagerly for his cousin's promised visit ; but that day William Lovet came not. It is true his conversation had something more irritating in it than pleasant to the ears of Algernon Grey ; but yet there was something in companionship, something in old associations and mutual habits of thought which he fancied would be a relief ; and he felt disappointment as the moments flew, and he saw him not.

Perhaps there might be a desire to fly from other ideas, to rid his mind of reflection upon matters on which he did not wish it to rest ; but as evening came on, and with it that change of light which, without diminishing the lustre of day, softens and saddens it, reflection would have way ; and Agnes Herbert was again the theme of his thoughts, resolution contending with affection, and an honourable spirit with a warm and ardent heart. He asked himself, "What am I feeling? What am I doing?" And to both, though seemingly very simple questions, he found it difficult to reply. The difficulty existed in the subtlety of man's heart, for skilful, indeed, must he be, and well experienced in the ways of that dark and intricate labyrinth, who can find the path to the arcana at once. And yet he remembered his sensations towards Agnes when he had stood with her in the chamber adjoining that of the Electress ; when her hand touched his ; when, bending down his head to hear her whispered words, he felt her warm fragrant breath fan his cheek like that of the spring wind. Could

he not have thrown his arms around her, and clasped her to his beating breast, and pressed warm kisses on those sweet lips, and asked her to be his—his for ever? Could he not at that moment have poured forth, as from a gushing fountain, the full tide of first and passionate love, bearing all before it on its fierce and eager course? He felt that he could ; he felt that he had escaped a great peril ; and he asked himself : "Should he risk the same again? Should he madly run into the same strong and terrible temptation? If he did, was it not improbable that any circumstances would arise anew to strengthen and support him ; that any means of escape, that any happy accident would present itself to enable or lead him to fly from the immediate danger?"

"It is madness to put it to the hazard," he thought. "No, I will not go!—I will frame some excuse, not to pain her kind and gentle heart ; and, even if I do show her a want of courtesy, it is better than to show a want of honour."

He paused and pondered long. He thought of what he should do, and what he should say ; he considered how he might best act so as to avoid the perilous society, without wounding one whose sole wish was to give him pleasure. Vain thought! Idle considerations! as they always are with man. We raise an imaginary scaffold, and then build upon it. Comes firm reality and knocks it down beneath our feet ; the whole structure falls ; and happy is it if our best hopes and brightest happiness are not crushed in the ruins. The last two hours—they were hours of meditation—had passed rapidly, far more so than he had imagined. He had not heard the sound of the clock ; he had not marked the rapid decline of the sun and the steady march of night. He saw, indeed, or rather, he felt, that darkness spread through the chamber in which he sat ; but he had rung for no lights, and he changed not his position. He remained fixed with his eyes bent upon the ground, his arm resting on the back of the chair, and the left hand playing with his empty swordbelt, not raising a look even towards the window, where the glowing heavens shone in radiant with the last smile of day.

In about a quarter of an hour after the key was turned in the lock, and some one knocked lightly at the door. He knew that it was Agnes's hand ; he felt sure of it before he saw her ; and, advancing quickly, he gave her admission, saying, in a mingled tone of joy and sadness : "Welcome, welcome, dear lady, you are punctual to your hour."

"Not quite," answered Agnes, "but I was detained a little. Your hour's freedom shall not be abridged, however : for we can stay out the longer—Now, will you come?"

There was a struggle in Algernon Grey's heart ; his lips would scarcely utter the words he had resolved on ; and, perhaps, had he not seen, as they stood together at the door, that the antichamber was for the moment vacant, the restraint, which the presence of others always more or less imposes, would at once have turned the balance against resolution. As it was, however, after a pause he replied : "Nay, dear lady, you will think me churlish

and morose, I fear, when I say it is better for me not to go; and, with deep gratitude and heart-felt thanks, decline your kindness."

"But why?" exclaimed Agnes, gazing on him with surprise; "surely, I should think it would be a relief."

"And so it is," he answered, "a sweet and joyful one; but that momentary relief, dear lady, makes me but feel the bitterness of imprisonment more painfully when it is over. Believe me, it is better I should stay."

His words, as so frequently happens with words which do not fully express all the speaker thinks, had quite the contrary effect to that which he intended. They made Agnes Herbert but the more eager to comfort and to soothe him, to lighten his hours of solitude, to banish the dark thoughts that seemed to oppress him; and she answered: "Nay, come! Do not give way to such gloomy fancies. I will take no denial. You surely cannot refuse a lady, when she asks your company in a walk through the free air. I fear you hold my gratitude as little worth; but this is the only means I have of showing it. I would willingly come and sit with you and cheer you through the day, if my uncle would come, too; but the Elector has besought him to hurry forward the new defences of the castle and the town; and every instant of his time is employed. Besides, you must come to-night; for I have got news for you of various kinds; and I cannot stay here to tell them."

Algernon Grey smiled faintly; but his resolution gave way; and, taking Agnes's hand, he pressed his lips upon it, answering: "You are very kind—too kind; but I must not make you think me ungrateful for such kindness; therefore I come." At the same moment the guard re-entered the anti-chamber and Algernon Grey followed the lady through it and descended the stairs with her.

Grown somewhat bolder by custom, the lady led him at once across the great court, and thence into the gardens of the castle. "Now," she said, with a gay laugh, "if you had the will to be refractory, who could stop you from breaking prison! Not this weak hand, I fear."

"But these gardens are all walled round," answered Algernon Grey, "and hemmed in with the fences and outworks. Methinks it would be no easy task to make one's escape hence."

"As easy as a sail upon a lake with a light wind and a summer sky," answered Agnes gaily. "The ground is all pierced over which we tread, with subterranean passages leading hither and thither, some to the mountain, some down into the town. Did you not see those two obelisks just now with two half open doors by the side? Well, they lead straight into the city; and the first night, when I was wandering with you through these gardens, you must have remarked a man appeared so suddenly, he startled me. He was some one belonging to the castle, who had come up by the vaults. But I must not tell you all these secrets, lest, and so many doors of his cage open, the captive bird should take wing and fly away."

She spoke gaily and lightly; and Algernon Grey replied, "No fear, no fear, dear lady; you have a stronger hold upon the poor bird

than wires or bars—the chain of honour. No gentleman could so misuse your trust. But you seem yourself to be well acquainted with all these secret ways; though, doubtless, they are not much trod by lady's feet."

"Oh, I have them all in my little head," she answered, "as if upon a map. My uncle has shown them to me all; for he has a strange sort of superstition, that some time or another the knowledge may be needful to me. I know not what he fears or fancies, but so it is; for gloomy thoughts frequently possess him, and I do not wonder at it. But now I will tell you my news, and first a silly story about myself; for women, they say, always like to talk about themselves before all things. Do you know our adventure last night alarmed my uncle for his poor child's reputation?"

"How so?" exclaimed Algernon, with a start and feeling of more apprehension than the lady's words might seem likely to produce; "what adventure, sweet lady?"

"Oh, our adventure in escaping from the apartments of the Electress Dowager," Agnes replied; "do you not remember passing the fool upon the stairs, and the page? Well, they saw us come forth from the room on the left; and that fool is as malicious and insolent as he is drunken. He met my uncle a few minutes after; he thought fit to jest with my poor name. But I only laughed when I was told; for, methinks, when the breast is clear and the heart quiet, one may well treat a fool's ribaldry with scorn. But my uncle took it up more seriously, and insisted I should ask permission of the Princess to tell the whole, in case of need. I related to her all that had happened to us, how we had overheard in the neighbouring chamber part of her conversation with her son, and how we had determined to confront the fool and the page upon the stairs rather than listen to more. She said we had done well, and gave the permission I asked for."

"Did it end there," asked Algernon Grey, "or has this knave been busy spreading his scandal?"

"Oh, yes," answered Agnes, "he has; and perhaps it is lucky I obtained leave to speak; for early this morning the Elector sent for me, and with a grave brow, told me I had been seen the night before leading the English prisoner down from his mother's lodging. I answered simply enough, 'I know I was, your Highness. The fool and the page both saw me.' He then asked me what it meant; and I replied, that I had her Highness's permission to tell him, if he asked, that it was by her commands that I had brought you thither and led you away again."

"What more, what more?" said Algernon Grey, as the lady paused.

"Why, this intelligence seemed to throw him into a fit of musing; and, at length, he said, 'So, she has discovered him, too, and his errand;' and then he asked me if I knew who you were; I answered, 'I had been told your name was Algernon Grey;' and thereupon he laughed and shook his head; but inquired no further, saying, 'If it were by his mother's orders, it was well.' Nevertheless, I could see that he thinks you some great man, and that you come here upon some secret mission."

of deep moment. So, henceforth, I shall call you 'my lord,' and be vastly ceremonious."

"Nay, nay, not so," answered Algernon Grey, thrown off his guard; "give me none such formal titles, sweet lady; from your lips they would sound very harsh to me."

"Then call me not 'lady' any more," she answered; "none but the servants here do that. I am the child of the castle, and to those who know and love me I am only Agnes."

Algernon Grey felt his heart beat fast; but he had a habit of flying away from such emotions; and after a single moment's pause, he said, "I must clear your mind of one impression, however. The Elector is quite wrong; and so, I fancy, is the Electress Dowager. Because, for an idle whim, I and my cousin have pledged ourselves to each other to go through Europe for a year under false names, they fancy here, I find, that we have some concealed object, and that I, who never meddled yet with the intrigues of courts, am charged with some mighty secret mission. I give you my honour—and by this time, I hope, you know it is to be trusted—that I have no such task to perform; that I have no state secrets of any kind; in short, that I am but a simple English gentleman, travelling hither and thither to while a certain portion of dull time—"

"Which you heartily wish were over," answered Agnes gaily.

"Not so, upon my life," answered Algernon; "although I deeply love my country, yet there are matters therein sooner or later to be brought to issue, which make me long to go on wandering thus, till life and the journey find their close together, and never more to set my foot on British shores. But here come sad thoughts again, and I will not indulge them. You hinted that there was more to be told me. I hope the rest of the tidings is less bitter; for it is painful to me that your great kindness, Agnes, should have brought discomfort upon you or your uncle."

"Oh, to me it is none, and with him it is past; but the rest of my news will, I am sure, be pleasant to you. You have heard of an unfortunate duel that was fought," she said, looking up in his face with a smile which the twilight did not conceal, "between an English gentleman and the Baron of Obertraut. You have been sorry for the young baron, I am sure, and will be glad to hear that to day he is much better. His wounds, indeed, seem not to be mortal, as was at first thought; and that these terrible faintings, from several of which they fancied he would never revive, proceeded solely from great loss of blood. I heard he was up this afternoon, and seated in a chair."

"This is good news, indeed," answered Algernon Grey. "Believe me, I did not seek to wound him, and perilled my own safety to avoid it; till, at length, in the half-light—for it was then growing dark—I was obliged to return his attack, seeking to touch him but slightly. He slipped, however, and was thus more sharply hurt. You, too, are pleased if I judge rightly," he added, gazing down upon her with an inquiring look; "for methinks that a part of the young baron's wrath against myself is a sort of retribution for one pleasant evening that I enjoyed too much with you in these same gardens."

"I trust not," said Agnes, eagerly; "I trust not. He should have known better; he should have known that that is all in vain. He is a noble, brave, and upright man, generous, and kind in many things; but still—" and there she paused, as if unwilling to speak farther.

Two or three minutes of silence had passed, and the hearts of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert were, perhaps, both busy with feelings somewhat similar. At length, a wild strain of music rose up from the town below, and they paused on the edge of the great terrace to listen to it.

"A party of young students singing," said the lady. "Do you love music?"

"I must not say better than ought on earth," said Algernon Grey; "but yet, if I were to ask for any sort of consolation in hours of grief and heaviness, I would choose some sweet voice to sing my cares away. I made my cousin send me up an instrument; but I know not how it is I have not had the heart to use it."

"Oh, I will sing for you some time or another," answered Agnes; "I learned from a famous Italian musician who was here, and who said I was no bad scholar."

"It would be, indeed, a great delight," answered Algernon; "but I fear I must not hope for it as a solace of my imprisonment, if your uncle is so busily occupied."

Agnes looked down thoughtfully for a moment, and then laughed. "I do not know," she said; "I do not know; we shall see. I trust your imprisonment will not be long; and you told me once you were going away very soon. I must lose no opportunity of showing my deep thankfulness for what you have done for me. It is little, indeed, that I can offer. Some men have mines of gold and precious stones, and some but a garden of poor flowers; but were I a prince, I would not value less the tribute of the poor man's blossoms, if given with a willing heart, than that of the great vassal's ore. I do hope that you will feel the same, and accept all I can do, though it be but small, as a testimony of what I would do had I greater means."

We need not pursue their conversation farther: for nearly an hour more it went on in the same strain; and if the resolutions of Algernon Grey faltered for a moment now and then—if a tenderer word would fall from his lips—yet still, considering the feelings that were at his heart, he exercised great power over himself. I know not whether it were better or worse for Agnes that he did so; for certainly the calmness of his manner, and the careful tone of his language, aided her in deceiving herself as to that which was in her own breast. She laughed to scorn the thought of love between them. She was grateful, deeply grateful; and if there was aught more in her bosom, she fancied it was but a feeling of compassion for one she thought wronged by unjust imprisonment. She could hear him talk as calmly of his departure, she said to herself, as she could listen to a sermon or a lecture. She could speak of it herself without one emotion. Was this like love! Oh, no. She had a deep friendship for him—well she might have; but that, and gratitude, and compassion, were all. Agnes knew not what she would have felt had she been called

upon to part with him that moment. As it was she went on gaily, like a child treading the verge of a precipice, and gathering flowers upon the edge of destruction. And when the time of his short liberty was at an end, she was sorry for it; for it had been a sweet and pleasant time to her. They parted at the door of his chamber, each with a sigh; and Algernon Grey paced up and down his solitary room; and, as the moon rose solemnly over the hills, he opened his window and gazed forth, as if his thoughts would be more free with the wide expanse of heaven and earth before him. The moment after, he heard the sound of an instrument of music; and turning quickly round to the right he saw the light streaming forth from an open casement, which, as far as he could calculate, was near those of the Electress Dowager. He could not see into the room; but the sweet sounds issued forth upon the night air, as a skillful hand swept the strings; and a moment after, a voice, the sweet, clear, rounded tones of which he knew right well, poured out a flood of melody, rising and falling on the ear like the notes of a nightingale in the spring eventide. The music was not exactly gay; but yet, every now and then, a cheerful tone enlivened the graver strains; and partly from memory—for he had heard the song before—partly from the exceeding clearness with which every word was pronounced, he distinguished each verse as it was sung.

SONG.

The moon is on high, but she's hid by a cloud,
The prospect looks gloomy and drear,
And still through the night may she weep 'neath the shroud;
But daylight is coming, and near.
The heart is bowed down 'neath the cares of the hour,
And the eye may be dimmed by a tear;
But the heart shall rise up in the morn like a flower;
For a brighter day's coming, and near.
We have trusted and hoped, been oppress'd, and have grieved;
But joy will return, never fear;
There's a trust and a hope that is never deceived;
A brighter day's coming, and near.
Each life has its joy, and each life has its pain;
But the tempest still leaves the sky clear;
And for honour and truth, which are never in vain,
A brighter day's coming, and near.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER night passed of agitating thought, with but little sleep and many troublous dreams; and for more than one long hour Algernon Grey remained in deep and intense thought, pondering over the present and the future. I know not how or why—for there are many mysteries in man's nature, which the skill of philosophy, as yet, has not been able to unravel; but certain it is, that at one particular portion of the night, unless sleep deaden the reflective powers and still the imagination, or active exertion occupies the thoughts with tangible things, dark and gloomy images come crowding upon the mind, and seem to triumph over the powers of reason, with a supernatural influence, like that which has been attributed to spectres from the grave. All that is sad and horrible in man's general fate, all that is grievous or perilous or worthy of regret in the history of the past, in

the aspect of the present, in the prospect of the future, marches by in long and black procession; and the oppressed heart is fain to exclaim, at this sight of human ills, "What! will the line last to the crack of doom!"

The couch of Algernon Grey was not without such apparitions; and—alas! that I should say it—the thought of her who had just quitted him in all her beauty, in all her sweetness, in all her grace, but rendered the wild phantoms of fancy more terrible. He felt, he could not deny, in that hour of the opening of the heart's secrets to itself, that he loved her, eagerly, ardently, with the first passionate love of enthusiastic youth; that to win her he would willingly have sacrificed rank, name, station, aught on earth but his own sense of right. But still, at the same time, came a voice from his own breast, like that of fate, repeating, "She cannot be thine! she cannot be thine!"

"What should he do?" he asked himself; "how should he act?" He could not repay her gentle kindness, offered in simple innocence, by a grateful heart. Flight was his only resource; but he was a prisoner and had no power to fly. Chained down to the sole society most dangerous to his peace, it seemed as if he were tied to the stake to endure to the utmost the fiery ordeal of temptation. Then again, he strove to cast the thoughts from him, and gained a brief interval of sleep; but visions, all coloured by the same gloomy hues, either disturbed repose, or made him start up again to think of the same themes, and wrestle with the same dark adversaries.

At length the day dawned; and, starting quickly from his bed, he hurried to the window, opened it, and gazed forth. Oh, how sweet was the fresh aspect of the morning to his wearied eyes, as calm and refreshing to the mind as the gentle breath of the early summer day to the heated cheek it blew upon. The golden light spread through the valley and over the hills, suuk in amongst the deep woods and throughout the masses of the dark trees from a soft background of luminous mist; while, here and there, a woodman's fire or cottage chimney, sent up wreaths of faint blue smoke, rolling in graceful lines amongst the leaves and branches.

The day went on in its usual course: many hours of solitude, broken only by the entrance of a servant or the guard. Algernon Grey found no means of relieving the tedious passing of the time. He tried to read, but he could not. He turned from the instrument of music he had asked for, with a sickened feeling, as if sweet sounds would but increase the bitterness of meditation. Thought, devouring thought, consumed the moments; till towards evening, when the guard threw open the door, and to his surprise he saw his old and attached servant, Antony, enter and approach him. The man's face wore a mingled expression, as if he was striving to keep up his usual appearance of gaiety, when in truth his heart was sad; and his master would not suffer one who, he well knew, loved him dearly, to see how bitterly circumstances made him feel his imprisonment.

"Well, Tony," he said, in a cheerful tone; "so they have given admission to you to me, at length."

"Yes, my lord," replied the man; "they have come down from their high flight, now that they find their heavy bravo will not die. I hope your lordship has not fancied I have been negligent; for I have been up here twice a day, and the page as often. The little devil would have stabbed the guard, I believe, to get entrance, if I had not stopped him; but we two are not enough to storm the castle, and we should have only got ourselves in limbo too. However, to-night they let me in, to carry you these letters, which a courier brought just now from England; so there are now four of us; and, if you like, methinks between us all we can contrive to get you out."

Algernon Grey shook his head with a smile, and taking the letters and reading the addresses with a listless, uninterested look,

"No, no, Tony," he said; "they would only catch us again, before we had gone far. But what was that you said of the young Baron of Obertraut?"

"Why, the fellow you fought with, sir," answered the servant, "if you mean him, is getting better hourly. He was out in the garden up there, to-night, by the bank of the river, sitting in a chair. You have not hurt him much, it seems. Pity you did not send your sword through his maw. The bleeding will do him good, however; for he is mighty pale, and won't affront an English gentleman again, I warrant. I saw him myself when I rode up to get tidings. There he was, sitting all white and colorless in a great gilt chair against the wall of the house, like a wax-candle in a sconce."

While the man had been speaking, his master had slowly approached the window, opened one of the letters, and was reading the first lines as his servant concluded. For a moment or two the subject of the epistle seemed to produce no great effect. He smiled slightly, ran his eye down to the bottom, skimming carelessly the contents, and then turned the page. The next moment, however, he seemed to be stirred by strong emotions; his brow contracted, his eye flashed, his lip quivered, and the hot angry blood rose in an instant into his cheek and overspread his forehead with a fiery glow. Straining his eyes upon the sheet, he read on; and, when he had done, held the letter open in his hand for several minutes, gazing sternly up into the air. He uttered not a word; but the servant could see how his heart beat, by the quivering of the paper in his hand. Then, throwing it down upon the table, he tore open the other hastily and read it likewise. The contents did not seem to mitigate his agitation, though they mingled a degree of scorn with the expression of his countenance. This time some portion of his emotion found vent in a few brief words: "So, so!" he cried. "So bold and shameless—and shall I be restrained by such scruples! Nay, nay, this is too bad—England, farewell! You shall not feel my foot for many a day!"

"Ah, my lord!" said the man, "things seem going on at a fine rate, truly; methinks, when one takes a part so boldly, the other may well choose his part too. Faith, I would let them whistle for me long enough, before I went."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Algernon Grey, turning upon him sharply.

"Why, my noble lord, I have had a letter, too, by Hob, the courier; and I dare say the news in mine and yours is all the same."

"And has it become the common scandal, then?" said Algernon Grey thoughtfully. "So young, so fair, so haughty, and yet so shameless! Leave me, Tony, leave me, and come up to-morrow early; doubtless they will give you admission, if all goes well—I want naught more to-night; leave me, I say."

"Well, my lord, if I were you, I would not take it much to heart," replied the man, lingering for a moment ere he departed. "There's not much love lost on either side, I believe, and never was; and you will be just as well quit of a bad bargain."

Algernon Grey waved his hand for him to leave the room, but answered not; and when the man was gone, he strode up and down the wide chamber for full half an hour with quick and agitated steps. Then, casting himself into a chair, he laughed aloud, exclaiming, "I am a fool! Why should I grieve! Why let such idle passions tear me! I love her not—have never loved her—I condemn, despise her—have ever scorned her pitiful pride, and but strove, against my nature, to bend my affections to my duty. Let her take her course—nay, indeed, she has taken it."

The door opened suddenly, and then, for the first time, he perceived that night had fallen, as the lights from the ante-chamber poured in; and he saw the form of Agnes, without distinguishing her features, standing in the doorway, like a graceful shadow.

"Will you come to-night!" said that sweet, musical voice; and, starting up, Algernon Grey snatched his hat from the table, replying—"Most willingly, fair Agnes."

As they walked along through the courts by the Altan, out into the gardens over the terrace, Agnes saw that a great change had come upon her companion. Far from seeming to have received any heavy news from his native land, it appeared as if some heavy weight had been taken from his mind. His manner was light and cheerful; his words gay and full of unusual fire—somewhat wild and absent, indeed, at times; but still, the whole tone was sunshiny and very unlike the gloomy mood of the preceding night.

The difference made Agnes thoughtful. She asked herself, "Is it his nature to be thus variable?" But she would not believe it. There was something in her breast that would not let her think the slightest ill of him beside her. The picture of his character was already drawn by the hand of affection upon a woman's heart; and, when such is the case, stern, and hard, and continued must be the wearing power that can ever efface the lines. A new light seemed to break upon her; and at length she said, "I think I can divine that you have heard how much better is your adversary. It is said they will bring him into Heidelberg to-morrow."

"Yes, I have heard it," answered Algernon Grey, "and am exceedingly rejoiced to find his wound will not prove dangerous."

Agnes was satisfied; his new gaiety was accounted for; and, as they wandered on, she

gave free course to all her own thoughts, as they sprang up from the deep well of the heart unobstructed to the lips. Once, indeed, she was a little frightened at her own feelings and at his manner. Not that he said aught to alarm or agitate her; but there was a tenderness mingled with the frank and rapid outpouring of all the ideas that seemed to cross his brain, which startled and moved her. But women have always some veil ready to hide agitating truths from their own eyes; and Agnes dismissed the thought ere it had possessed her mind for a moment. Carried away by the quick and sparkling current of his conversation, her brain seemed to whirl as the mind followed him; and he, in the turbulent emotions produced by the tidings he had received and the struggling love within his bosom, suffered himself to be hurried rapidly on, he saw not, he knew not, he cared not whither. Their perilous course in a frail bark some few days before down the furious torrent of the Neckar was but an emblem of the voyage of their two hearts along the troubled stream of love that night. Time flew on more rapidly than either of them knew; the castle clock striking ten roused them as it were from a dream; and, returning to his prison, Algernon Grey, as before, parted from Agnes in the ante-chamber. The moment he had entered his own room the door was closed; he cast himself upon a seat, leaned his folded arms upon the table, and, as if utterly exhausted, let his head fall upon his arms; and there, for three long hours, without a change of attitude, he remained plunged in the cures of wild, unformed, unregulated thoughts. An attendant came in, but he took no notice of him. He placed supper on the table, and invited him courteously to take some. He replied not, for he heard not; and the man, thinking that he slept, retired.

At the end of the time I have mentioned the prisoner started up, brushed back the rich brown curls from his broad forehead with a bewildered look, and, taking a light, retired to bed and slept, strange to say, profoundly.

The sun had risen high; an attendant had twice entered the large room; and all the world was busy with the ordinary affairs of life, before Algernon Grey awoke from one of those deep, dreamless sleeps, which sometimes succeed to the exhausting conflict of passions in the human breast. For a few moments he could hardly tell where he was; he could with difficulty recollect the circumstances in which he was placed, or the events of the preceding day. But, as they rushed at length upon memory, a shadow came over his face; and again the question recurred, "What am I doing? Whither am I hurrying?" The gloom of the preceding days came over him more darkly than ever, and he passed a full hour in anxious thought.

"No, no!" he exclaimed at length; "whatever be the temptation, I will not do such wrong to her young and innocent heart as to seek its love, while there is no chance, no hope of our ultimate union. I will rather see her give her hand to another, and live on in loveless, cheerless solitude myself. Yet, if I am kept here, if I linger near her in this constant companionship, with her beauty and her grace

before my eyes, her sweet voice sounding in my ears, her high yet gentle thoughts mingling with and softening my own, how can I so guard myself as never to betray the secret of my bosom!—how can I restrain myself so as not to tell my love and seek hers in return? Men have tried the same before and have ever failed. I have no such confidence in my own strength, and I will not risk it; I will fly—whatever it cost to tear myself away, I will fly."

The hours went by; and a little before noon the prisoner received a brief visit from Herbert. The news he brought was so far satisfactory, as it showed Algernon the prospect of his speedy liberation. His adversary had been removed into Heidelberg the day before, had not suffered in the least by the exertion, had passed a good night, and pronounced himself quite well. But the duration of the old officer's stay was so short, that no other information could be communicated. After dinner Algernon's servant appeared again, but he brought no tidings; and when his master inquired, with some surprise, what had become of his cousin, that he saw him not, the stout servant answered, with a laugh, "Oh, sir, he is woman-hunting; some fair lady here has him always at her heels; but, though Heaven forbid I should say I love him much, yet I do believe he has striven to serve you, in this matter at least; for I know he has been twice with the Elector and once with the Electress about your affairs."

"And why love you him not, Tony?" asked his master. "I have seen, it is true, that you have less reverence for him than pleases me; but I would fain know the cause."

"I have known him from a boy," replied the man drily; "and, though he never did aught to injure or offend me, yet there are certain things that one sees, and hears, and knows, which, do what a man will, make up in the course of time an amount of love or disliking very difficult to be changed. I own I love him not; and, to say truth, I have found few that do who have known him as well; but it is no affair of mine, and, if you love him, I have naught to do but to be his humble servant."

"I trust you will show yourself so," replied his master; "first, as he is my kinsman; next, as he is my friend."

"I will, my lord," replied the man; "unless I can some time show you that he is not your friend; for that's a point I doubt."

"You are prejudiced," answered Algernon Grey; "and I thought not to see one, who wants not sense, recollect the follies of a boy, long, long years afterwards. Now leave me."

"It is not only follies I remember, my lord," replied the servant, gravely; "I never accused him of follies. It is not head he wants, it is heart. For ten long years I saw him in your father's house, a child, a lad, almost a man; and I know him well."

"Leave me," said Algernon Grey sternly; and the servant withdrew. But, if the truth must be told, his young master was more inclined to share his sentiments than he would admit. For some years he had not seen his cousin, ere he joined him on the continent. He had remembered him only as the companion of his boyhood, elder by several years, but still bending to share all his sports and pastimes;

devising pleasures for him, and breaking the dull ceremonies of a stately household. After they met again, however, he had seen much that pained and displeased him; and he felt sorry, not without good cause, that he had entered into one of those wild and romantic engagements with him, to travel together for a certain time under feigned names, which had been rendered common at that period by the publication of the most popular, but, at the same time, it must be said, the most idle romance that ever was written—"The Astrea of D'Urfy." He turned his mind, however, from the subject as soon as possible, after the servant had left him; and now he tried to read and pass his time with any other thoughts than those of Agnes Herbert. All those who have made such efforts know how vain they are. She was ever before his eyes, ever present to his fancy; and he gave up the attempt, asking himself whether, if she came again that night, he should go as before, or steadily refuse such dangerous companionship.

He was saved the struggle, however; for about five o'clock Herbert again presented himself, followed by a guard, and, taking Algernon's hand warmly, he said, "Come, my young friend, your imprisonment is drawing near an end. The Elector has sent for you, and, doubtless, it is to give you freedom, for this young Obertraut is recovering fast. Come with me, and we shall soon hear more."

Algernon Grey followed willingly enough, and the English officer led him, by several of those passages and staircases through which he had passed with Agnes on the first night of his imprisonment, to the eastern part of the castle, where Frederic's own apartments were situated. At length, crossing an antichamber full of guards and attendants, they entered a hall where the Elector was waiting with his court. There was but a small attendance of the Palatinate nobility, it is true, not above fifteen or twenty persons being present; but Algernon Grey saw several who had surrounded the Prince on the first night of his presentation, and amongst the rest Lord Craven and the old Baron of Obertraut. The worthy chamberlain's countenance, notwithstanding the reports made of his son's health, did not seem a bit more placable than when last the young Englishman had seen it; and that of the Elector bore a somewhat grave and embarrassed look. As the whole party were assembled not far from the door, however, Algernon Grey had not much time for observation before he stood within a step of the Elector, and to his surprise found Frederic's hand extended towards him. He took it instantly, and bent his head over it, without, however, bowing the knee, and the Prince at once began the conversation, saying:—

"I have been much grieved, sir, to be forced by the laws and customs of my country to subject you to the inconveniences of imprisonment till such time as the results of your duel with one of my officers, the Baron of Obertraut, could be fully ascertained. We have an edict here repressing such encounters; but as you are a stranger to our laws, though amenable to them while in these dominions, I must say the fault was more his than yours. The

Baron may now, however, be considered well, and I am willing to pass over the offence on both parts; in his case considering all that he has already undergone, and in yours, your ignorance of our laws. I have sent for you, therefore, to tell you your imprisonment is at an end, and to reconcile you with the family of your late adversary. Henceforth, I trust, you will be friends, not enemies."

Algernon Grey was about to reply that he had never entertained the slightest enmity towards his opponent, when the old Lord of Obertraut took a step forward and said, in a sharp tone, "I came here, noble prince, to seek reparation, and not friendship; and I beseech your Highness—"

But at that moment he was interrupted by a low voice from behind, saying, "Will you allow me to pass, Lord Craven?"

The gentleman thus addressed made way; and the next instant the Baron of Obertraut himself came forward, ghastly pale, and apparently somewhat feeble, but yet walking with a firm step and an upright head. The moment he stood before the Elector, he held forth his hand frankly to Algernon Grey, saying, "I, at least, sir, entertain no such feelings; I come here to ask your friendship, and to thank you for a lesson you have taught me, which will make me a wiser man to the end of my life. I have been somewhat spoiled by success and flattery, sir; and needed a check, such as this wound has given, to teach me that no man can always have his way in this world. You are the most skilful swordsman I have ever seen; you dealt nobly and honourably with me, and in this presence I declare that the whole fault, from first to last, was mine. I sought the quarrel, urged it on, led you to the place of the encounter; and I do believe that, exposed by my rash anger to your cooler skill, my life was often at your mercy, had you chosen to take it. I thank you, therefore, for the wound you gave, and trust you will forget the past, and take my offered hand."

"With my whole heart," answered Algernon Grey, pressing it warmly; "and I do assure you, Baron, that only the defence of my own life would have induced me to injure you. I could not help it, however; for you are not an adversary to be trifled with. Indeed it was more accident than aught else that gave me a momentary advantage. Had not your foot slipped on the wet sward, the chance might have been against me, and I should have been lying still enough by this time."

The young baron smiled with a look of pleasure at this testimony to his skill; and the Elector, calling the old Lord of Obertraut into one of the deep windows, said, "My lord, I intimate—nay, I command, that you let your anger drop, and cease all vain pursuit of revenge. This is no ordinary man you have to deal with. I know him, though he believes I do not, and am aware not only that he is one of the high nobles of England, but also that he is sent hither on a secret mission of deep importance to my welfare."

"A spy, sir, you would say?" murmured the old lord, in a low bitter tone.

"Hush, sir!" cried the Elector, his brow growing dark; "no more of this if you would

merit the continuance of my favour. I am not so powerless that I cannot make my commands respected by my own court. You hear what your son has said. He exculpates him of all blame. No serious injury has been done, and I insist that you yield to reconciliation."

"As the boy is satisfied," replied the chamberlain, doggedly, "and in obedience to your Highness, I submit;" and turning towards Algernon Grey, he added, "By the commands of my Prince, sir, I am ready to let this matter drop; but I must advise you not to try such things again with—"

"Hush, hush, my father!" cried his son, "I will proclaim to all the world that there never was a more noble gentleman than he who now stands before you; and as you have hated him solely as my adversary, I do beseech you now to love him as my friend."

"Well, sir, well," replied the old lord, "I have taught to say; let the matter be passed and forgotten;" but it was evident that his ill-will was but little diminished, and his angry pride unpacified.

"Well," said the Elector, with a courteous smile, "this all being settled, and animosities healed, we will now part for the evening—and you, noble sir," he continued, turning to Algernon Grey, "though I will only call you by the name you are pleased to assume, will, I trust, grace our court by your presence to-morrow at the hour of eleven. We have there matters of some weight, which we wish to make known to all friends and well-wishers, either of the Elector Palatine, or his lady, the pearl of England; and we trust, that you may be ranked in both classes."

"I will not fail, your Highness," answered Algernon Grey; "but I fear it may be my audience of leave-taking."

"Not so, not so," replied the Elector; "we shall find means to keep you with us, I do not doubt. However that may be, farewell for the present;" and passing through the opposite door with a large part of his train, comprising the old Baron of Obertraut, he left the hall. As soon as he was gone, Algernon Grey's late adversary once more grasped his hand, saying, "You must not go, my friend; the Elector has need of swords such as yours; ay, and of hearts and heads such as yours, too. If there is chivalry in your nature; if there is high spirit and generous enthusiasm—and I know there is—you will give him aid in his hour of need. I may be tied down to this spot by many things; but if you go with him, I know there is a better arm and better brain than any I could bring."

"Nay, not better," answered Algernon Grey, "though equally devoted to any good cause. But I know not what you mean, on what expedition he is bound, or what enterprise is before him."

"I cannot tell you," answered Obertraut in a low voice; "and I cannot entertain you, as I could wish, at my own lodgings, on account of this sickness; but if you inquire for me to-morrow, ere you come hither, I will tell you more. Now I must return; for, to say truth, I am tired. I never thought to know the day when I should say that a short walk and a brief conference were too much for my strength; but so it is, and I must go and lie once more down and rest."

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The party broke up soon; but ere Algernon Grey quitted the hall for the purpose of returning to the place of his imprisonment, to see that all his effects were carefully carried down to the inn below, Lord Craven approached, and, after shaking hands with him, said something in a low voice.

"This evening, if you will," answered Algernon Grey; "but what is it, Craven?"

The young nobleman replied in a whisper; and a dark cloud immediately came over Algernon Grey's countenance.

"I know it all," he answered; "all that you can tell me, Craven. Come and see me, if you will. Right glad shall I be to spend an hour with you; but mention not that name again. Much is, doubtless, false; much is, doubtless, exaggerated; but much must be true that should not be so; and my own course is decided." Thus saying, he turned to Herbert, and, after a few words, walked back with him to the tower where he had been confined.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE fair Princess of England, now in the pride of youth and beauty, in the full sunshine of prosperity and power, with one of the fairest portions of the earth for her dominions, with admiration, flattery, esteem, love, almost adoration, rising up almost like incense before her, but with so sad and dark a fate for the future, sat in her silver chamber, surrounded by all the beauty she could collect from her husband's dominions. There were only three men present, two old German noblemen, and, strange to say, our acquaintance, William Lovet. The hour was nearly the same as that in which Algernon Grey was summoned to the presence of the Elector; and every face around was full of satisfaction as the Princess and her countryman talked somewhat lightly of the imprisonment of Lovet's kinsman, and the prospects before him; using the French tongue.

The Englishman stood before the chair of the Electress, with his hat and plume dangling from his hand, his head slightly bent, his ear turned to hear the Princess's words, and a slight sarcastic smile upon his finely-turned lip.

"Good faith! your Highness," he said, in answer to something the Princess communicated, "I know not well whether to rejoice or be sad at the tidings you give me."

"Sad!" exclaimed Elizabeth, with a look of much surprise; "have you not yourself been urging his liberation?"

"That was a duty," answered Lovet, with the same meaning smile; "but there may be unpleasant duties, madam."

"Are you his friend, his kinsman?" exclaimed the Electress.

"Both," answered Lovet; "but yet, friendship may have unpleasant duties to perform. I urged his liberation not because I thought it best for him, but because it was what he had a right to demand."

"Is he so wild and rash, then," demanded Elizabeth, "that, like a lion, he must be kept in a cage!"—But you are jesting; I see it on your face."

"Good faith! not so I, lady," answered the

Englishman; "but because all men do not know what is best for them; and my cousin is one of them—a rare, keen judge for others, but not for himself.—Now, look around, your Highness. What do you see?"

"Too many things for a catalogue," answered the Princess; "vases, statues, hangings of blue and silver, many fair ladies, and—"

"Stop there, I beg," said Lovet. "All these bright things make me judge that it were wise for any gay and courtly gentleman to stay amongst them; but these same things—nay, their very beauty"—and he ran his eye over the circle round the Electress, calling forth a well-pleased smile on many of the faces near—"have quite the contrary effect on my good cousin, making him seek to fly such sweet temptation; and, like a wandering friar, or our good friend St. Anthony, resist the devil, love, Hymen, and the rest, by solitude and maceration." The Electress laughed and he proceeded; "We are of different judgments, he and I; while I am free, I stay even where I am; no sooner is he at liberty than he flies, depend upon it; but if I could have a private word with your Highness, I might tell you more, and say things worthy of your ear."

Elizabeth gazed round the circle for an instant, and then said, speaking English, "There is no one who understands our native tongue."

A momentary hesitation seemed to come over William Lovet; and he paused for an instant, ere he replied. It was seldom that such a thing happened to him; for he was ready and quick at repartee, and had, as is the case with many a shrewd and intriguing man, a habit, as shrewd as nature, of veiling his direct meaning in figures which implied more than was actually said. He rarely found a difficulty in making his hearers easily comprehend all that he meant, while he guarded against an accurate report of anything that he had instigated, requested, or desired, by rendering the expressions in themselves so unmeaning, that, when repeated to an unprepared ear, their sense, if they had any, seemed very different from that which the circumstances at the moment gave them. In the present instance, however, his task was one of some difficulty; for he sought to convey to a mind, naturally shrewd and acute, and accustomed to deal very much with hyperbole and metaphor, a false idea in the general, while all the particulars were in themselves true.

So long did he remain silent, that the Electress at length said in a tone of impatience, "Well, sir, what would you say?"

"Good faith! your Highness," he answered in a frank tone; "I do not know well how to begin. I must not forget that it is my cousin I am speaking of; but yet I wish to give you such an insight into the matter that you may judge fairly of it by yourself. From various circumstances, which it is little worth while to speak of, this good cousin of mine has conceived a horror and fear of woman's love."

"I can conceive the circumstances," answered the Electress; "his history is not wholly unknown to me, Master Lovet."

"Then you have the whole affair," answered her visitor, catching gladly at the admission; "I need say nothing more. You have seen

with your own eyes, know right well, must have heard and marked the attractions which your court possesses for my poor cousin Algernon. Within two days he took fright at his own sensations, and was for flying as fast as possible; but a duel, a knight-errant like adventure, imprisonment, and the devil to boot, I believe, have detained him here even till now; and Love's chain, I doubt not, is round and round his heart by this time. Nevertheless, he will snap his fetters as soon as his limbs are free; and as I have promised, by an oath more binding than a marriage vow, to go with him wherever he goes for the next year, you may well judge that I am not very anxious to see his prison doors unlocked."

Elizabeth meditated for a minute or two, and then answered, "I should have thought the mission which brought him hither would detain him somewhat longer at our court."

"There are two objections to that supposition," replied Lovet; "first, that whatever object he had in coming hither—of which I know nothing, for he has his secrets as well as I have mine—must be attained by this time. Depend upon it, your Highness, if he had any object at all, it was but to examine, to see, to inquire, and nothing more. He must have seen enough of your court, must have heard enough of coming events, for a quick mind like his to have formed its own conclusions."

"That is one objection to my view," replied the Electress; "what is the second?"

"A very simple one," said William Lovet, "namely, that the court of the Count Palatine is very soon to become, if what men say be true, the court of a great king. Heidelberg is about to lose its splendour, and those who stay there may study or may sing amongst night-gales and professors, with sweet voices and deep learning; but no courtly auditory, and but small company."

The Electress smiled. "Such things may be," she said, in a grave pondering tone, seeming to consider each word; "but yet, my good sir, as all things must come to an end, so must this gentleman's visit to our court. Only I would rather—whatever my husband's decision may be upon matters which have been bruited about somewhat too largely—I would rather, I say, that a noble gentleman of my own land, supposed to be sent hither expressly by my father, should not take his departure immediately that the Elector's resolution is made public."

Lovet saw his advantage, and exclaimed at once, "Heaven forbid! it would be most detrimental!"

"Highly so," rejoined the Electress. "Rumours, true or false, assign to this young gentleman a high place in the world's esteem, the confidence of his own sovereign in the task of watching here the proceedings relative to the Bohemian crown, and of acting according to circumstances shall seem to need. It will certainly, as you say, be most detrimental, if immediately that the Elector's decision is known, he were to withdraw himself instantly from our court, from any private motives such as you mention. Men would instantly say that the step we were about to take was disapproved of by the crown whence we have the best right to

look for assistance and support. Little, indeed, have we had hitherto; and such an act on the part of your friend would be fatal. We all know what is the effect of high countenance in the outset of a great undertaking; and I need not tell you that my father's lukewarmness in this cause has already created difficulties, and disheartened our followers."

Lovet laid his finger on his temple, and seemed to consider deeply the subjects brought before him. But, if the truth must be told, this thoughtful mood was assumed; and he answered the next moment with a sudden exclamation, as if some bright thought had struck him, "Were it not better that you took him with you to Bohemia! His appearance at Prague, with all the rumours going before him which your Highness has mentioned, would give hope and confidence, would raise the spirits of the people, would depress and keep in check the adverse party, and would add an ingredient tending to strengthen union, which is all that would seem wanting to complete success."

"But would he go!" exclaimed Elizabeth. "The same motives that made him eager to quit Heidelberg, would surely withhold him from Prague."

"When we set a trap for a linnet," said Lovet, "we take care to conceal the wires. 'Tis needless that your Highness should say, that either the Lady Agnes goes with you, or the fair Countess of Lausnitz."

The Princess smiled; for she not unwillingly mixed herself with the small policy of her husband's court, and took some pleasure in the cunning parts of diplomatic intrigue. She made no answer, however, and Lovet proceeded:—

"If ever there was a gallant and chivalrous spirit in this world, it is my cousin Algernon's. To serve a lady with his sword, or his heart's best blood, would be the pride of his life, provided he did not fear that by so doing he would bind himself in somewhat too strong a chain. At your first call, the spirit of his race and his name will rise to defend your cause before the world—a lady, his Princess, the love of all hearts, the admiration of all eyes, would find a right willing servant, and one who, in the camp, or court, or counsel, could do great deeds; ready and willing, I take upon myself to say, he would be, if one fair lady's name was not mentioned in your train."

The Princess mused, and seemed somewhat embarrassed. "I have always intended," she said, "that if we go—of which I as yet know nothing—Agnes should go with me; I have told her so. She would look upon it as a slight if I did not take her. She has been to me almost as a sister since I have been here—but I will speak with her; for much must be sacrificed for a great object."

"Nay, your Highness, speak with her not," answered Lovet, laughing; "leave her not bothered; once he has promised you the service of his sword, he will not break his word, nor withdraw from the contract; but there is no need of naming those who are to accompany you, as all shall be mentioned at the first. Omit your names which may be added afterwards as they may think fit. Heaven forbid that a high name shall not have right and title to change

her mind seven times a day, as well as a washwoman's daughter!"

"I understand," answered Elizabeth, laughing, "I understand; but you think, then, he will not take flight if he finds that this fair dangerous little friend of mine is one of the train after all!"

"No fear, no fear," replied Lovet; "once promised, he is yours for life or death; and good faith! to say the truth, 'tis fair this lady should be of the party. When he once finds her sweet companionship fixed upon beyond the possibility of escape, he will yield himself gaily to his fate, put on the Celadon, and humanize himself a little, which is all that he wants to make him perfect in his way. Never was statue, or hewn block of stone, from Lot's wife down to the works of Praxiteles, more cold or uncomfortable as a companion than my good cousin Algernon, solely from his lamentable fear of giving way to the fire in his own heart. For my part, I think a little honest love gives the crowning touch to all excellence. With the virtues which the old Romans attributed to the fine arts, it softens manners, purifies the heart and spirits, elevates the character, and takes from us that touch of the wild beast, which is always to be found in what my great-grandmother, who was a Lollard,—Heaven keep her from purgatory!—used to call 'the natural man.'"

"I believe it does, sir," answered the Electress, amused, and even pleased, with the strange picture his conversation displayed of many qualities apparently very opposite, and not knowing that all which was apparently good was thrown in to make the dish suit the palate of the person to whom it was presented,—"I believe it does; but it must be, as you say, honest love to do so."

"Well, beautiful princess," replied Lovet, with a low laugh that he could not suppress,—one of those light, demoralizing, satanic laughs, which attack virtuous principles, unassailable by any argument—"I only speak of honest love. The thought of naught else could ever enter into my good cousin's heart; he is as pure and innocent as what Will Shakespeare calls a sucking dove; and that love, when he finds he cannot escape from it, will be a chivalrous bond to your court and service for ever."

"And your own love, Master Lovet," asked the Princess; "you don't suppose I have been blind to your devotion to a certain fair lady! What of your own love?"

"Oh, immaculate and high," answered Lovet, with his sneering smile; "the pure conception of enthusiastic devotion—a passion, like the flame on Vesta's altar, burning for ever with a holy light—no smoke, high Princess, no red and fiery glare, but blue, and thin, and cold, like the flame of spirits on a sponge—quite spiritual, quite spiritual, I can assure you!"—and he laughed again in bitter mockery of the romantic character of the age, which could conceive that love can be separated from the fire that is its life. "Surely, surely, bright lady, if others can be permitted to play Strephons, I am not to be blamed if I celadon it a little, though the languishing eyes of the Countess of Lausnitz do look as if they would wake the terrestrial Eros, rather than the celestial."

In spite of herself, the Princess could not but smile; but, putting on a grave look the moment after, she replied: "Well, well! Far be it from me to lay any restraint upon gallant and noble devotion to the fair: it is the high moving power to all great actions; and on it am I ready to rest for support myself, should need be: but remember, Master Lovet, I will have no scandals in my court; that is an indispensable condition to your sojourn with it."

"Scandal, your Highness! Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Lovet: "I would not have a scandal for the world. Always consider what such a thing would imply: I declare the very thought of it would spoil my breakfast, had I not made one good meal before I came out. The consequences would be frightful: first, I should lose your Highness's favour; next, I should have to cut the throat of a little fat, small-eyed husband—work for a pork-butcher, but not for a cavalier with clean hands; and last, I should have to marry the fair dame myself, which would certainly put an end to all our fine Platonics. No, no, by that fair hand I swear, you shall have no scandal by any act of William Lovet."

"Well, Sir William," answered the Electress, "you will recollect that false names do not cover well-known faces; that your reputation is not quite so clear and bright as a new crimson velvet cloak, laced with gold; and that, knowing the person and his ways, I have my eye upon him. As to the other matter, I will think of what you have said concerning your noble cousin, and will act after due deliberation. We must not lose him on any account, if it be possible to keep him; but, ere I decide on aught, I must speak with his Highness; for these are matters, in regard to which a woman's judgment is not worth much."

"Oh, a woman's judgment for ever!" cried William Lovet: "in love, war, wine, and policy, there is nothing like a woman's judgment—But now I will take my leave, for I see these fair ladies round marvelling sadly at our long conversation in an unknown tongue—though, Heaven help us! what we should have done on many great occasions I know not, if certain wise gentlemen of antiquity had not thought fit to build a high and very impious tower of Babel, and been cursed with strange languages, which have proved very serviceable to their posterity. However, if we talk farther in one of our Babel dialects before these bright dames, their sweet wits will find or frame treason in it; and I shall be impeached to the Elector for talking something more soft than German to his lovely Princess. Thus, then, I humbly take my leave; and, if you follow my sage advice regarding my good cousin, I will so play my part as to insure that he is bound hand and foot to promote your great and glorious undertakings."

CHAPTER XIX.

ABOUT an hour after his liberation, Algernon Grey sat alone in his chamber at the Golden Stag, absorbed in deep meditation. The servants came and went, bringing down from the castle all those parts of his baggage which had been carried up during his imprisonment, but he took no heed of them; and even Frill, the

page, obtained little notice, though he endeavoured strongly to attract attention by eloquent speech and graceful demeanour. The great question on which man's fate turns so frequently throughout life: "How shall I act at this step!" was then before his eyes; but his mind wandered back into the past, and, scrutinizing what had occurred during the last three days, Algernon Grey could not free himself altogether from the reproaches of his own heart. "I have been weak," he said. "I have been wrong; I have yielded to circumstances, where I should have resisted them; I have been tender in tone and manner, where I should have been cool and stern. Better, far better, that she should think me rude, discourteous, unkind, than that she should have hereafter to say, that I did her wrong and sought her love secretly, when I could not do so honourably. Even now it is far wiser to encounter any sort of reproach than give good cause for dark, well-founded accusation. I will go—the issue is determined. To-morrow's sunset shall find me in Heidelberg."

His thoughts ran on from that starting point into the future, and he asked himself, "What was before him; what was the path he could pursue; what was the end to which it would lead?" The prospect was dark and gloomy. No light shone upon it, no variety appeared to cheer it, but one wild waste of life spread out before him, overhung with clouds, and bearing naught to shelter or console. He felt like one of those anchorites of old, who voluntarily quitted the sunshine and the richness of cultivated nature, to plunge into the gloom and sterility of the desert. He felt that at that moment, there was beauty and brightness around him, all that could charm the eye or captivate the heart; that gaiety and pleasure, the exercise of the mind, the sport of the fancy, the kindling of passion, the ecstasy of love, the wild enthusiastic delights of a free heart revelling undisturbed in the enjoyment of the best gifts of Heaven, were ready for his grasp, if he chose to seize them, with but one obstacle—but that obstacle to his mind, insurmountable. He felt that he was about to fly them all, voluntarily to resign everything that his heart longed for: with the parched mouth and thirsty lip to renounce the cooling draught of the deep well of happiness open before him; and to speed on through the arid desert of existence, with no one to support or cheer, with not one spring of the sweet waters of comfort to give him hope along his desolate course. Barren, barren spread out the years before him. As he looked through the long sunless vista, it seemed as if an open tomb was all that closed the far perspective to receive him at the end of his weary journey, and afford the dull sleep of death and corruption. "May it come soon!" he thought, "may it come soon!" and, with his hands pressed upon his eyes, he remained pondering bitterly over his sad, strange fate.

"Ah, Algernon," cried a voice, as the door opened, "you look marvellously joyful over your emancipation. One would think you had been in a dungeon a whole year, to see your temperate gaiety at the recovery of your freedom. But I knew how it would be, and I told the Electress the result. I urged her strongly to keep you in your soft bondage, telling her, that

to set you at liberty was but to restore you to the slavery of a most perverse education.—But how goes it, my good cousin !”

“Well, I thank you, William,” answered Algernon Grey, rising and shaking off his gloom, determined to encounter Lovet’s keen jests with a careless tone. “Faith, you are quite right, my cousin. The cheerful society that you afforded me every day in prison made captivity so sweet, that I could have staid in it for ever.”

“See the ingratitude of man !” cried Lovet, laughing. “I have given him up one-third of my whole time, and yet he is not satisfied, although, by the code of love and gallantry, as he well knows, the other two-thirds were not my own to give ; they were pledged, pawned, impignoned, and I might as well have stolen a jewel out of Madame de Laussitz’s ear, or taken any ring off her finger but one, with as much right and justice as I could have taken one minute more than I did to bestow upon my kinsman’s affairs. Did I not thrice see the Elector ? Did I not twice see the Electress ? Did I not make love to seven of her ladies ? Did I not bow nine times to nine old gentlemen ? Did I not fee a page for an audience ? and actually embrace a chamberlain—the most disgusting task of all—entirely to obtain his liberty ! although I knew the first use he would make of it would be to work his own unhappiness and my disappointment.”

“Nay, William, nothing of the kind,” replied Algernon Grey. “We are all upon the search for happiness, you and I alike ; and each must seek his in his own way. I thank you for all the trouble you have taken ; but birds, when they are free, will use their wings ; and so will I to-morrow. I have not been so long accustomed to a cage as to love its neighbourhood.”

“Stay, stay,” cried Lovet. “Your pardon, my good cousin ! I am not on the search for happiness : that is a wild-goose chase, always beginning, never ending ; still disappointing ; offering fruition nowhere. Pleasure, pleasure is what I seek—the honey that is in every flower. If we exhaust one, why let us fly on to another. The bee for ever, Algernon ! That industrious insect is my emblem. Good faith ! I will ask the heralds if I may not put it in my arms. Like it, I seek the sweets of life, wherever they are to be found ; and the wild thyme, or the cultivated rose, is all the same to me.”

“But a spendthrift-bee, after all,” answered Algernon Grey ; “for you lay up no store for the future, but consume all the honey that you find, and build no waxy cells for future years. After all, the emblem is not a pleasant one ; for, were you as thrifty as the best, one master, Fate, would come and smother you in the hive.”

“I will give him no cause,” answered Lovet, gaily ; “for I will eat my honey while I have got it, and hoard none to tempt his ruthless hands. But a truce to bantering, Algernon : I have really laboured hard to set you free, thinking that a much better way of spending my time than piping to you in prison, like Blouet to good King Richard. But now, what is it you intend to do ? I have trusted and hoped, that a few hours’ quiet reflection in an airy room up three pair of stairs, would turn the fresh mist of your young propensities to good sound wits,

and teach you that where you have all before you that can make life happy, it is needless to go like a drunken man into a purse full of gold, and slip the ducats with your thumb-nail into a draw-well.”

“What do you mean ?” asked his cousin ; “I intend to throw nothing away that is good. Base coin is as well in a draw-well as anywhere else.”

“Nay, nay, be frank,” exclaimed Lovet ; “I mean that you do not surely intend to quit this place so soon as you have once threatened.”

“I see no reason why I should stay,” answered Algernon Grey.

“What ! not love !” cried the other. “Nay, my good cousin, do not look detected ! Can you suppose, that I have not seen, that I do not know ! By every sign and token, from an untied collar to a hat put on wrongside before, from a sigh in the middle of a well-turned sentence to an answer made as irrelevant to the purpose as an old maid’s comment on last Sunday’s sermon, you are in love, man, up to the neck in that soft quagmire, love. And, good faith ! I must own, too, that, considering your inexperience of such things, and the resistance of your nature to all sweet influences, you have not chosen amiss—bright eyes, sweet lips, a cheek like a ripe peach, hair bright and glossy as the sunshine on a bank of moss, a form that might have made Helen envious, and false Paris doubly false.”

Algernon Grey seated himself at the table again, and leaned his head upon his hand, with his eyes thoughtfully bent down, and a red spot in his cheek. He would not, he could not say that he did not love ; but he was pained that his clear-sighted cousin had divined the truth.

In the mean time Lovet proceeded, seeing clearly that Algernon did not listen ; but trusting that a word or two at least would fall through the inattentive ear upon the mind, and produce, perhaps, a more lasting effect than if they were listened to and answered.

“Stay, Algernon, stay,” he cried ; “stay and be happy. Cast not away from you, for vain fantasies, joy that is seldom afforded to any man more than once in life—opportunities which neglected never return, and leave unceasing regret behind them. Stay, and make her yours.”

“Make her mine !” exclaimed Algernon Grey. “How !”

“Oh ! a thousand courses are open,” answered his cousin. “Shall I point them out !”

Algernon waved his hand and shook his head, with a bitter smile ; “I see none,” he answered.

“Well, listen,” replied Lovet. “This Herbert, this uncle, is a soldier of fortune—a man of no rank or position to bar the path to one of your name and station. Troublous times are coming on ; and over this fair Palatinate will, ere long, roll a sea of disasters, which will break bonds, shake ties, and, in a wide chaos of confusion, leave opportunities which a wise lover would profit by.”

“Nay, nay,” cried Algernon Grey, starting up and raising himself to his full height, “no more of such a theme ; you do not understand me, William.”

“Right well, my cousin,” replied Lovet, with

one of his sarcastic smiles; "but I thought it best to put the worst case first, and set your shrewish puritanism in arms, by displaying the path that any other wicked worldling would take. The fair lady's heart is, doubtless, more than half gone already; and though, perhaps, like all these proud beauties, she might start a little at first from the thought of such unconditional surrender, yet that said little tyrant Love would compel obedience to his commands. Then, however, there is another course to take. The high-stilted course, in all respects suited to your stiff and magnificent ideas."

"Ay, what is that!" cried Algernon Grey, turning quickly toward him, and betrayed, by a sudden gleam of hope, into a greater display of his feelings than he could have desired.

Lovet suppressed the smile, that half curled his lip, ere his cousin saw it; though he knew well that even to have raised up for a moment a vision of happiness before his cousin's eyes, was so much gained for his own plans. "The matter, methinks, is very easy," he answered; "you have naught to do but first to make her yours beyond recall; and then, being much too virtuous to remain in an unhallowed union, give her the deepest proof of your tenderness and love by breaking this boy-marriage of yours with the Lady Catherine. What right have fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, or grandfathers and guardians either, to pledge a boy of fifteen by a vow at the altar to an engagement for life, the very nature of which he does not understand? It is both absurd and wicked; there may be many doubts whether it is lawful—"

"None, none," cried Algernon Grey; "it has taken place a hundred times. Poor Essex and myself are in the same sad case."

"Ay, but he is worse off than you," answered Lovet; "for he, like a fool, went back and took her home, while you have wisely staid away with the broad sea between you. Now, though the lady and her good friends may very likely, as the matters stand, hold fast by an engagement which secures to her high rank and large possessions as your wife; yet, if she finds you entangled irrevocably with another, she will soon consent to that which you desire, and on a joint petition to the peers this baby-matrimony will be soon annulled."

"She will not consent," said Algernon Grey, bitterly; "she will not consent;" and then he added, fixing his eyes upon Lovet, "and is it you, William, who can wish that I should thus treat your own fair cousin?"

"Oh," answered Lovet, with a laugh, "it will not break her heart. I know her well, better than you do, Algernon; and I advise you for the happiness of both. This is no common case of perfidy. What does she know of you to make her love you! or give one sigh because you love another? Do you think, my fair cousin, that your great qualities are so apparent, or your fine person so attractive, that one short sight of you at the altar at the age of fifteen, tricked out in a white satin doublet, purfled with blue, and laced with gold, is quite sufficient to make her die of love for you! or, what were more marvellous still, to preserve a holy constancy of maidenly affection during seven long years of absence? Pooh, pooh!

she is not of that spirit at all, I can tell you. If she thought of you at all, when last she saw you, it was but as a pretty, well-dressed doll; and doubtless, had they left you with her then, she would have stuck a new farthingale round your neck better to her taste, or put you in a cradle and rocked you to sleep. She has got other notions now; but, for aught we know, you may not be the object of them."

"Perhaps not," replied Algernon Grey, setting his teeth hard; "perhaps not, Lovet,—I have reason to think so!—But now mark me, my good cousin, and you know that I am firm in keeping my resolutions; I have seen a fair and lovely creature here, beautiful, kind, innocent, high minded: I would as soon pollute that creature, if I could, as I would destroy the beauty of her face; I would as soon bring wretchedness into her heart, as I would break those lovely limbs upon the rack—so, once for all, no more of this. I shall leave Heidelberg to-morrow."

Lovet paused, and thought for a moment, laying his hand upon his brow, with a studied air of meditation: "I thought it was on Saturday next," he said, "that the Elector went."

"That the Elector went!" repeated Algernon Grey; "I know not what you mean, William."

"Pshaw, my good cousin," answered Lovet; "you do not suppose that I am not aware that Frederic has been urging you to go with him in this expedition to Bohemia; I do not mean to say that you are making your love for Agnes Herbert an excuse to me for a rash consent to the Elector's wild and unprofitable scheme; but you will not deny, that, tempted by the prospect of renown in arms, and strange adventures in a distant country, you have taken advantage of the offer, thinking at the same time to divert your mind from what you think dangerous thoughts, and quit a society that you love too much."

"I will deny it altogether," answered Algernon Grey, calmly. "The Elector has never mentioned the name of Bohemia in my hearing; I was not aware he had accepted this thorny crown, or that he was going either soon or late."

"Why, it is all over the castle and the town," cried Lovet; "and if he have not asked you, he will do it, be you sure. Craven goes with him—"

"And the Princess!" demanded Algernon.

"She goes, or follows immediately," said his cousin, "like a true dame of romance, she tells me, with but two ladies and but two waiting-women, some half-dozen antique gentlemen, and a troop of horse."

Algernon Grey mused, calculating whether it was probable that Agnes would be one of those selected to accompany the Electress. At length he asked, in a somewhat hesitating manner, "Did you hear the ladies' names who go with her?"

"Oh, yes," answered Lovet; "one was the Baroness Löwenstein, whom you saw the other night; the other a Countess, with a hard name I do not recollect, and would not utter if I did; all I know is, it is not Laussitz.—But be prepared, my fair cousin: for, depend upon it, the Elector will ask you; and, if you are not mad, you will plead some other occupations; for

nothing will come of this rash scheme but disaster and hard blows. He is a gallant Prince, it is true, and will, doubtless, have to aid him a brave and manly chivalry; but the odds against him are too great. Spain and Savoy, and Burgundy, the imperial power and three-fourths of the empire, papal gold and intrigue, and Italian mercenaries enough to conquer a new world. While France negotiates, England hesitates, and Holland takes care of itself. You had better frame some excuse; so with that warning I will leave you; for there is a pair of soft violet eyes looking for me as I ride up the hill."

Algernon Grey smiled. It was not at his cousin's allusion to the Countess of Laussitz, but rather, that Lovet should think he could be deterred by such arguments as had been used. The reader may inquire if Lovet thought they would deter him. It would seem not, and even Algernon Grey became suspicious as he meditated.

"I will make myself sure," he said, after pondering for some time. "It is more than probable she will remain with the Electress-mother; and if she do, this adventure is as good as any other to fill up a space of time. I will go up and take leave of her and her uncle to-night; for, perchance, I may not see them at the court to-morrow."

His heart sunk as he thought of that leaving-taking; and he shrank from the task, which he felt it would not be courteous to leave unperformed. Minutes and hours passed by; and it was late in the evening before he went; but at length he set out on foot, and, taking his way by what is still called, I believe, the Burgweg, he reached the gates of the castle, and obtained admission. As usual, the courts and passages were filled with a moving multitude; but Algernon Grey walked straight on, noticing no one till he reached the tower in which Colonel Herbert's lodging was situated, and, mounting the stairs, he knocked at the heavy oaken door; a voice said, "Come in;" but it was not that of the English officer; and the moment after he stood before Agnes Herbert, who sat writing at a table alone. She started up, when she saw him, with a joyful smile; and, giving him her hand, congratulated him on his liberation. But, after a few brief sentences had been spoken, her manner became more grave; and she said, "You were seeking my uncle; but he has just gone forth, leaving me to copy this paper for him."

"I came," said Algernon Grey, in a calm and firm, but, in spite of himself, a very sad tone, "to bid him adieu, as I thought it more than likely, from his busy occupations, that I might not see him at the court to-morrow morning."

"Adieu!" said Agnes. "Are you going soon, then?" and as she spoke her face turned deadly pale.

"I must go, I fear, to-morrow," replied Algernon Grey, "as soon as I have taken leave of the Elector and the Electress. The hour named for receiving me is at eleven; will you be there?"

"I think not," answered Agnes, in a voice that trembled slightly.

"Then, dear lady, I will bid you farewell now," said Algernon Grey, using a strong com-

mand over every word and every tone. "Believe me, I am deeply grateful for all the kindness you have shown me, and shall remember the days I have passed here, though several have been days of imprisonment, as amongst the brightest things of life."

He had intended, when he went thither, to explain to her his situation; and had Agnes uttered one word, which could have led to the subject, it would have been done at once. But for a time she remained silent; and he felt that to obtrude such a topic would be but too plainly to indicate the feelings of his heart towards herself. When she did reply, she merely said, "You are generous to express any gratitude to me. I have but shown you common kindness, while all the debt is on my side. I, too, shall recollect these hours with pleasure, as having enabled me, however poorly, to show the thankfulness that is in my heart for the noble and gallant conduct which delivered me at a moment when a terrible death seemed certain. I do not think my uncle will be present, either, to-morrow; but I know he will grieve much not to see you before you go; and if you like to give him such satisfaction, you will find him at the fort, called the Trutzkaiser, where he is causing some alterations to be made."

She spoke quite calmly, though her cheek still remained colourless. At one or two words, indeed, her voice trembled; but there was no other emotion visible.

Algernon Grey took her hand, and pressed his lips upon it, saying, "Farewell! Agnes, farewell!"

"Farewell!" she answered; "may you ever be as happy as I am sure you deserve!"

He shook his head sadly, withdrew, and closed the door.

The moment he was gone, Agnes sank into the chair where she had been sitting, covered her eyes with her hand, and seemed to gasp for breath. The next instant, however, she raised her head high, cast back the glossy hair from her face, and exclaimed, "This is nonsense, this is folly! People, with their idle warnings, have put such vain imaginations in my heart. But they are gone, and that is over;" and, drawing the paper to her, she strove to write again.

CHAPTER XX.

Once more the courts of the castle of Heidelberg were crowded with horses and servants; once more guest after guest was arriving, not now for the purposes of revelry and mirth, but for the more serious object of hearing the decision of the Prince upon a question destined to affect the course of his whole life.

Amongst the rest who rode in, followed by their servants, were the two young Englishmen, with whom this history has been so busy. There was no hesitation now as to their admission; and, following some gentlemen who had dismounted in haste before them, they were soon in the hall, where the Elector was receiving his court. No ladies were present, but a door was open on his left, through which the sweet tones of woman's voice were heard; and Algernon Grey remarked, that several of those

present, though not all, after having spoken for a moment with the Prince, passed on, and entered the chamber to which that door led.

Through the greater part of the crowd—for the hall was already nearly full—seemed to reign a sort of joyful enthusiasm. Every countenance beamed with high thoughts; every voice spoke in gay tones; and nothing but satisfaction seemed to be spread around by the tidings, which were now general throughout the whole. If one or two of the noblemen, indeed, who stood immediately round the prince, bore a graver and more sedate aspect, it might well be attributed to courtly ceremony; and Frederic's own face, though there was nothing like thoughtless merriment upon it, was cheerful and serene, as if well and fully contented with the determinations to which it had come.

After waiting for a few minutes till several others had passed, Algernon Grey and his cousin approached and saluted the Prince.

"You have come somewhat late, gentlemen," he said; "but, nevertheless, I am right glad to see you here; and I trust you, sir," he continued, speaking to Algernon, "will understand the motives on which I have acted towards you, and, in your generous nature, will forgive and forget any pain I may have felt myself called upon to inflict."

"Entirely, sir," replied the young Englishman; "and I do assure your Highness, that I come to take my leave of you with a heart free from all rancour towards any one in your court."

"Ere I receive your farewell, sir," replied Frederic, "I will beseech you kindly to pass into the Queen's chamber, on the left, where your own fair Princess may have something to say to you;" and he pointed with his hand to the door which has been mentioned.

Algernon Grey bowed and passed on, followed by Lovet, who whispered, ere they reached the reception-room of the Princess, "You hear! she is queening it already. Mind that you give her the Majesty."

The next moment they had the whole scene of Elizabeth's saloon before them; and, although it would seem that there had been a certain degree of preparation, to produce a greater effect, yet assuredly there was enough to move even cold hearts to enthusiasm. There sat the young Princess of England, still in the first freshness of early life, without one charm impaired, one grace lost. Her eyes were lighted up with the fire of enterprise and courage—her lip smiling with warm hopes—her whole form breathing energy and courage. Even in the hand, which, stretched forth on the small table before her, grasped a roll of papers, might be seen the firm, unconquerable, yet mild, spirit within. Around and behind her stood a number of the ladies of her court,—all beautiful, all radiant with the same enthusiastic light which beamed in their sovereign's face. Around the room, with one or two a little advanced, and one close to the table at which the Electress sat, were all the first men of the Palatinate, young and old: some with white hair, and faces scarred and seamed; some in the prime of vigorous manhood; some with the faintly traced moustaches, showing the first step of adolescence; and, mixed with these,

were nobles and princes from several other lands, ready to peril life and fortune for the fair being before them.

The buzz of conversation spread around, gay smiles were on every face, the expectation of grand events in every breast; and the rich crimson hangings of the room, the gay dresses, the gold, the varied hues, the lacc and jewels sparkling in the sun, rendered the scene to the eye as bright and impressive as a knowledge of the occasion, and anticipation of the results of that meeting, made it matter of deep interest to the thoughtful mind and feeling heart.

Algernon Grey paused for a few minutes near the door, gazing over the groups around, and meditating over all he saw, while the Princess spoke in a low tone with the gentleman at the table. He was a fine looking old man, with a keen eye and a powerfully built frame, and ever and anon he bowed his head with a grave smile, and answered something in the affirmative to what the Electress said. At length the young Englishman saw her eye rest upon him and Lovet, and as soon as her conversation with the other seemed brought to a close, he was about to step forward, when Elizabeth herself raised her voice, and, looking round, said aloud, in a peculiarly clear and silvery voice, "Princes and noble gentlemen, you have heard from my lord and husband the decision he has come to on the petition of the wronged Bohemian states, that he will take upon him the crown of this country, of which his own acts have deprived Ferdinand of Gratz, now emperor. I have no voice to tell the many mighty reasons which induced him, without aught of personal ambition, to accede to the wishes of a brave and indomitable nation, who sought in him both a ruler and a defender. Nor do I think it needful that I should. I will only ask, who would refuse the task! Who would reject the cry of the oppressed! Who would not become the defender of a brave nation struggling merely for its just rights! However, it is not to be denied that there are difficulties and dangers in the way, that mighty powers are opposed to us, that every effort of the oppressor, that every means which subtlety and despotism can employ, will be used to frustrate the efforts made for the maintenance of the privileges of the German princes, for the establishment of religious and political freedom amongst the members of this great confederation. I speak of these things as a woman; and, doubtless, my husband has explained them to you as a man. He has asked your aid, and, if need should be, your swords to support him, and, in supporting him, the freedom of the whole Germanic empire, princes and people alike, in maintaining the rights of every class, and freedom of faith, as the birth-right of our citizens. I appeal to you as a woman; I can use no such strong arguments; I ask you who will support with counsel and in arms Elizabeth Stuart! On your chivalry, on your gallantry, on your devotion I rely: I will found my throne upon the swords of such as those who now surround me; and if the hands that bear those swords be willing, as I believe they are, the banner has not yet been raised upon earth that can prevail against them."

She spoke eagerly, warmly, but without effort.

It seemed as if the words sprang from the heart to the lips, born of the feelings, and uttered without thought. Her cheek glowed; her lip trembled with emotion; her eye flashed; and when in the end it became dim with glittering dew, as the last sounds trembled on the ear, an enthusiastic murmur burst from the crowd, and almost every one took a step forward to express their devotion to her cause.

There was one, however, who was before the rest, a strong and gallant looking man, of seven or eight-and-twenty years of age, whose hair and beard, notwithstanding his youth, showed here and there a line of grey.

"Who is that?" asked Algernon, speaking to a gentleman near, as the other advanced straight towards the table.

"That is Christian of Anhalt; Christian, the younger; his father stands there behind—what is he about to do?"

"Madam," said Christian of Anhalt, bending low, "I will beseech your Majesty for a glove."

With a look of some surprise Elizabeth drew the glove from her hand, and gave it to him.

Deliberately, but quickly, he fastened it beneath the jewelled clasp which held the feather in his hat; and, pointing to it with a proud smile, exclaimed,—"In court, and camp, and battle-field, I will bear this token of my service to your Majesty, till death lays my head beneath the turf—so help me, God!"

Lord Craven, who had stood near, merely touched the hilt of his sword with his finger, and said, "Madam, this is yours, and with it my whole heart."

"And ours, and ours, and ours," cried a number of voices round, in every tone of enthusiasm.

Elizabeth spread forth her hands, as if overcome by the burst of energetic love that her words had called forth; and then, pressing her fingers on her eyes for a moment, remained silent. The next instant she raised her head, showing the traces of tears.

"Thanks, thanks!" she cried; "I now am well assured. Yet will I not spare one noble cavalier, who has a gallant heart to fight for a lady's service; for they can wield swords in case of need; and we shall have to think of marching armies and rude shocks of war, where men are in their place. From these, and worse than these, if need may be, I will not shrink myself; but, by my husband's side, will encounter weal or woe until the last. Ladies, however, I will dispense with, as much as possible; for I have no right to take them from their softer duties, to share those tasks fate has allotted me. The Countess of Löwenstein has her husband's good leave to follow him to war, as war will be perchance, and the fair lady of ——— follows me for my love. Though my train will thus be small, yet, with such princely nobles round me, I shall want no kind tendance; and, as friend and brothers, in them will I put my trust, in them my highest hope. On Saturday next, our departure will take place. I beseech all, who can prepare in time, to be ready then, and all others to follow. Methinks, I am very nearly sure of all my husband's countrymen. I see several of my own present. One has at once promised me his aid. What say the others?—Will you

not go, my lord?" and she fixed her eyes directly upon Algernon Grey; "will you not support Elizabeth Stuart, with a still young, but often tried sword? Will you not follow her, where great deeds are to be done?"

"I say, like my friend, Lord Craven, madam," answered Algernon Grey, lightly touching the hilt of his weapon, "this is your Majesty's, and with it my whole heart. I go with you, of course; for it shall never be said that honour called me, and I refused to follow."

"And you, sir!" continued Elizabeth, turning to Lovet; "we know your reputation; you are a knight, brave, faithful, though fanciful, we have heard. What says your fancy to this expedition?"

"Why may it please your Majesty," answered Lovet, with a smile, "my fancy, like a young and feeble child, is in leading-strings to my noble cousin here. We have a compact that will not let us separate, like a leash between two greyhounds. Henceforth, the noose of the leash is in your hands. You may slip us at any prey you will; and I warrant that we dash forward as far, or farther, than the rest. I could have wished a few things altered, it is true; when, methinks, the state of Bohemia, and your Majesty's prospects, will be both much improved."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Elizabeth; "what may they be?"

"Why first, and as the principal,—for the others are not worth naming," Lovet answered, "more women in your Majesty's court. Depend upon it, bright eyes are great inducements to great deeds—a soft sort of whetstone to sharp swords, but yet it is so; and, besides, you do not consider the unanimity which a number of ladies give to any counsel."

"Methinks, you are jesting," answered the Princess; "at all events, slanderous men have said that ladies bring rather discord than unanimity."

"Discord amongst themselves," said Lovet; "but, if there be enough of them, unanimity amongst men. It all depends upon the numbers. With only two in your whole court, and some five or six hundred gentlemen, all in love with them together, as in duty we are bound to be, the wind of our sighs will toss about your banners in a strange fashion, even if we do not turn our swords against each other's throats, in order to reduce our numbers to the number of the fair. I do beseech your Highness, supply us somewhat more bountifully with objects of adoration. I frankly confess I am an idolator, and must have my share of gods and goddesses."

"Well, well," replied Elizabeth, "that is a fault that may be amended. Is there aught else you would cavil at, Sir William?"

"Naught, madam," answered the Englishman, "unless it be that I do believe you will have so many gallant hearts all armed in your defence, that the task will be too easy, and each man's mite of honour not worth the having."

"There is a quality in glory," replied the English Princess, "that expands it to embrace all who truly seek it. It is the heart and will to do great deeds that truly merit honour. It were a poor and pitiful thing, indeed, if it

could fall down at opportunity. The world may praise the fortunate man; even princes may raise, and courts may applaud; but true honour is the diamond which, though only admired when brought forth and cut, is of as high value even in the dark mine as on an emperor's crown. Fortunate or unfortunate, with opportunity or none, the man who, with a brave heart, arms himself in this our righteous cause, shall still have glory for his deed; and times to come, when his name is written, be it in tale or history, or the mere record of the family-book, shall add, as a mark of ever-living honour, 'He was one of those who drew the sword for Frederic of Bohemia, and Elizabeth, his queen; he was one of those who fought for a nation's freedom from oppression; he was one of those who aided to establish right against wrong, and set men's hearts and consciences at liberty.'

Elizabeth paused, with the marks of strong and enthusiastic emotions visible upon her countenance, and a murmur of applause ran through the assembled nobles, while one turned to the other; and, though perhaps each might use a different mode of expression, there can be little or no doubt that but one sentiment found utterance,—“Who would not fight for such a being as that?”

After a brief silence, the Electress resumed:—“A thousand thanks, noble gentlemen, to all. Had there been a doubt or misgiving in my heart, your words would have removed it; and now I will beseech you, as you go hence, to speak once more with my noble husband, and to give him, or rather his master of the horse, your names, and the number of followers you will bring with you: not that we may count our strength, for we have no apprehensions, but that lodging and provision for our train may be fully provided by the way: Farewell! And once more, thanks! deep, heartfelt thanks!” Thus saying, she rose and retired by the door behind her, followed by her ladies.

Slowly, and conversing as they went, the gentlemen there assembled returned by the hall, where they had left the Elector and his court; and each, passing before him, spoke to him a moment in turn. When, at length, Algernon Grey approached, the Elector addressed him with a smile, as if quite sure that his purpose had been changed.

“Well, sir,” he said, “are you still determined to bid us farewell?”

“For a brief space, your Highness,” cried Algernon Grey. “I understand you do not take your departure till Saturday next.”

“Not till Saturday week next,” replied the Elector; “but I hope then you will bear me company; for my fair wife, who reckons much upon her eloquence, counted fully on winning you to our cause.”

“I will go with your Majesty,” replied Algernon Grey; “and will but take my leave for a short time, in order that I may make preparation for serving you more effectually. I have with me but a few servants now; but I think, ere long, I may be enabled to swell your force with a small troop of followers not inexperienced in the trade of war. Some have served with me in this Venetian business; and

though they returned to England, when there was no longer employment for their swords, yet they will gladly join me again in such a cause as this.”

“But if you go back to your own land, you can never be here in time,” replied the Elector. “Remember, there is but ten days.”

“England will not see me for many a year, my lord,” replied Algernon Grey; “but I can make my arrangements better elsewhere than here. I will be ready to accompany your Majesty on the day named. My followers can join me at Prague; and though you may not see me till the very day, do not doubt of my coming, I beseech you.”

“I will not,” repeated the Elector, earnestly: “I will not. When an honourable man has given his word, it is better than the bond of other people. How many men, think you, you will have with you? We will have food and lodging ready for them all.”

“Not so, your Majesty,” replied Algernon Grey; “I defray my own followers, wherever I be. Lodging, indeed, it may be necessary to find; but as I lead them, so do I feed them, and pay all expenses. Lodging, indeed, I must have; for the peasantry of the country—ay, and the citizens of the town, have a grand objection, it would seem, to receive strangers in their houses, especially if they be soldiers; and therefore, in this, perhaps, your Majesty's officers must interfere, otherwise it may be difficult to find quarters at once. The number, however, will be about from forty to fifty. Their arms, their clothing, and their food, must be my affair; the rest your Majesty shall provide.”

“Leaving little but thanks to furnish,” answered Frederic. “However, be it as you will, my noble friend; I am neither poor enough, nor wealthy enough, to take so generous an offer amiss. Farewell for the present; and if you should want aid in any case, two words to our chancellor will be enough to bring it.”

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next ten days in the world's history are like those minutes of the night, when the hour strikes just as the eyes are closed to sleep, and a period passes by unnoted, except by those who dream. There are many such pauses in all annals, where no event marks the passing time on the recording page; and yet how full of interest to many are these unstoried lapses in the march of time. How many gay scenes, how many sad ones, how much of comedy, how much of tragedy, have been enacted in the days not chronicled! How many events have taken place in narrow domestic circles, which, spreading wider in their influences, like the ripples round a stone cast into a clear lake, have carried, almost imperceptibly, the floating fragments of great things to the shore of fate!

I have said that these ten days passed over unnoted, except by those who dream; but one of those was Algernon Grey, who, at the small town of Mannheim, passed the intervening space between his leave-taking of the king of Bohemia, and his return to Heidelberg, busied

to say the truth, more with deep thoughts than important arrangements. His letters were soon written, his courier soon despatched, and all those measures taken which were necessary to call a lordly following to accompany him on his expedition, and to insure rapid supplies of money to meet even more than his own probable expenses. The rest of his time was given up to meditation; for he had left Lovet at Heidelberg, agreeing at once that the short distance which separated them could be considered no infringement of the engagement into which they had entered.

Close rooms in narrow inns have neither a very wholesome nor a very pleasant character. Such as the small fortress, that Maunheim was in those days, could alone afford, offered no great inducement to remain within doors; and the greater part of his time was spent in wandering by the clear and glistening waters of the Rhine; and, while the current hurried rapidly by, drawing images of life and human fate from the bright waters, as they danced and fled beneath his eye. However those images might arise, the train still led him on to the place which he had lately left, and to one fair dream-like form which rose before him as a remembered vision of delight. All that had taken place immediately before, all the joys and sorrows he had known, would have been but as phantasmas, had not still enduring and immortal passion stamped the whole with the mark of reality, and told him that the bitterness was true: it was but the dream of happiness that was false.

Few scenes could have been worse chosen to chase such sombre thoughts, to wake him from those dreams of the heart which he believed he had indulged too long. The merry crowd, the gay, enlivening multitude, the ever shifting scenes of busy life might have led on thought after thought to occupy each hour, and banish vain regrets. The grander scenes of nature, the towering mountain, the deep valley, the profound, dark lake, the tempest and the storm, the forest, with its solemn glades and innumerable trees, might well have possessed him, even though it were at first but in part, with other images, and weaned him, if I may so call it, from the engrossing topic which now mastered all his mind. But that calm, grand river, flowing on in its meditative majesty, with sunshine and brightness on its peaceful waters, and none to break, even for a moment, the monotony of solitude, seemed to counsel thoughts of peace, and joy, and love, and spread like a charm over the young wanderer the powerful, passionate calmness in which it itself flows on. Agnes Herbert, she whom he loved beyond all power of forgetfulness, was ever present to his heart and mind. He thought of her in her sparkling beauty, as he at first beheld her, in scenes of reverie and joy; he thought of her in agony and helplessness, as he had seen her in the whirling waters of the dark Neckar: he thought of her in calm serenity and high-minded meditation, as they had wandered together over the moonlight terraces, amidst gardens, and woods, and flowers. And he loved her, oh, how he loved her! How his heart yearned, how his bosom panted to return and press her in his arms; but that a dark and irrevocable barrier

stood between, and mocked the eager longing of his love.

The common things of life seemed nothing to him; the ordinary events of the day, the meal-time and the sleeping hour, scarcely broke the lapse of the long, only dream. It was ever, ever Agnes, that was present; and when his eyes, worn down by weariness, were closed to waking things, she came upon the wings of the night, and visited his spirit in its sleep. He felt—he could not but feel—that to his peace, at least, her presence was less dangerous than her absence.

Thus passed day after day, till the last came; and then, to his surprise, by a boat towed up the Rhine, some eight or ten of his old followers, whom he expected not for weeks, presented themselves at the landing-place. His messenger had proved speedy and intelligent; and all those whom he had found in London, he had urged to hurry into Germany without delay. The activity and preparation gave some relief to their young lord's mind; and on the same night he set out to return to Heidelberg, at which place he arrived some two hours after dark, taking his way direct to the inn where he had formerly lodged, and where he had left his cousin.

The town, as he passed through, showed a gay and animated scene; for whatever portion of monotony had existed therein, while the streets presented nothing but their usual population of citizens and students, was now removed by the appearance of numerous parties of military retainers, whose arms here and there caught the light, as they passed by the unclosed windows, from which the beams of taper or lamp were streaming forth. All those inventions which give to our streets of the present times a light little less powerful than that of day, were then unknown. No gas displayed the face of house after house in long perspective; no lamp at every corner of the street lighted the wanderer on his way; no lantern, even, swung across with awkward chains, afforded a dim light to horseman or driver, as he paced slowly along in the midst of the tall and narrow streets. But, nevertheless, every here and there a faint beam, straying through the dull small pane of greenish glass in some still uncurtained casement, fell upon the gay, laced cloak, or brilliant cuirass, which appeared for an instant in the midst of some military party, and was then lost again the moment after, bequeathing the light to the wearer's successor in the ranks.

Round the door of the Golden Stag a great number of persons of different classes were assembled; and some of them seemed to be engaged in the pleasant occupation of wrangling with the host or his servants, in regard to accommodation for the night. No vain and ridiculous attempt had been made at that time to regulate the dealings of one man with another, by the incessant intervention of the police, which at all times aggravates the confusion which men pretend it is established to diminish. The interests of each individual were left to adjust themselves with those of others by the natural course, with this safeguard, that justice was always to be obtained promptly when injustice or wrong was committed; but there

was no endeavor to make men walk in a straight line, if they liked a crooked one, provided that crooked line did not trespass upon the comfort or rights of any one else. A few disputes might, and did occur, as was the case at the door of the Golden Stag; but they very soon came to an end; for knowing that the innkeeper was as much the lord of his own inn as the baron of his own castle, men satisfied themselves with grumbling, when they were told there was no room for them, and sought another lodging with the more haste, because accommodation seemed to be scarce.

As soon as the worthy host perceived Algernon Grey, however, he and his drawers bowed down to the ground. The young gentleman was assured that his old apartments were kept quite ready for him; and, although his entertainer viewed the numbers of his swollen train with some degree of apprehension, yet great care was taken to say nothing before the crowd, which could give any disappointed gentleman cause to suppose that such a party was received without previous notice of its numbers. When the horses had been delivered over to the care of hostlers and horse-boys, under the superintendence of the young Englishman's servants, and Algernon Grey and his host were ascending towards the rooms above, then poured forth the difficulties. Where he was to put the train, how he was to accommodate them, what room he could find for so many, where he was to get beds even of an inferior description, were mighty puzzling questions for the worthy landlord, with his house quite full; but, nevertheless, all was at length arranged. The ante-chamber was filled with trundle-beds and mattresses on the floor; the room by the side of Algernon's own bed-room received five of his companions; and two more obtained lodging in the rooms previously appropriated to his servants.

This being all arranged, he descended to the public hall, where Lovet, he was informed, was profoundly engaged with his supper. He found him surrounded by half a dozen German gentlemen, with whom he had made acquaintance, eking out very good French, of which they could understand a part, with very bad German, of which they understood not quite so much. They comprehended, however, that he was laughing at everything and everybody—himself amongst the rest—and smoothing their beards, and curling up their moustaches, they seemed to derive a considerable portion of grave amusement from his merriment, which, to say the truth, directed several shafts among themselves, although they were utterly insensible of the point.

"Ah, Algernon!" exclaimed Lovet, starting up and laying down his knife; "I thought you were as treacherous as a Chloe, and had vanished from my sight with some swain of the Rhine-plain. Welcome back to Heidelberg; but have you heard the news?"

"No," answered Algernon Grey; "are there any changes?"

"No," answered Lovet, "none that I have heard of. The Elector and his party, numbering, with ourselves, some six hundred horse, set out to-morrow a quarter of an hour after day-break. The Electress follows somewhat later

with a body of chosen cavaliers to guard and accompany her. All the world is so full of enthusiasm, that if any man were to say 'Come with me and conquer Turkey, let us sack Hungary, or pillage Russia,' they would all go without asking whether the way lay either north or south. Good faith! I am as enthusiastic as the rest; and, like one of a flock of sheep in a dark night, I am all agog to jostle shoulders with my fat companions on whatsoever road the great bell-wether leads."

"And what road is that to be?" asked Algernon Grey.

"Heaven only knows!" exclaimed Lovet, sitting down to the table again; "I have asked no questions. All I know is, that we make straight for a place with an inconceivable name, something like Waldsaxon, a town in the upper Palatinate. I sent on all your spare horses, as they arrived, together with three or four I had purchased for myself, telling the grooms to find the road the best way they could, and so they are probably now in the heart of Austria."

"Nonsense, nonsense, Lovet," cried his cousin; "where have the men gone to? If we are to make a rapid march, as doubtless we must, we must have the means of remounting; and a mistake would be no jest."

"Assuredly not," answered Lovet; "and, as I have scarcely time to finish my supper, before soft devotion calls me hence, sit down and take some food, and I will tell you, most noble cousin. Here, bring platters and knives, fellows; more wine, more meat, more everything. Well, cousin mine, looking on a fair picture of the country, I sent the men on half way to a place called Alkdorf, bidding them there wait for our coming, taking especial care to get themselves dead drunk, if it were possible, for the three consecutive days after their arrival. You will mark the policy, wise Algernon; for, as a man must get drunk sometimes, and always will get drunk in his master's absence, it was much better that they should do it by command than disobedience; and, fixing on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday for the operation, I left them Friday for lassitude, and Saturday for refreshment; so that by the time we arrive, they will be as brisk as larks; and the horses, if they have got drunk likewise. This partridge, stewed with sour cabbage, is the only excellent thing I have found in Germany—with one exception, cousin Algernon, with one exception. I beseech you take a wing thereof; for I would fain share with you as far as possible; and of the other good, which fortune sends me, I cannot even spare a sigh—much less a merry-thought. What will you have in the way of wine? Here is Burgundy, for which I sent a man express into the heart of France; and here is the juice of the Rhinegau, with some drops from the bishop of Bamberg's cellar, of which he was plundered when last the quarrelsome men of this country fought about they knew not what."

Algernon Grey sat down, and after musing for a minute or two, joined his companion in his meal. The conversation went on in the same tone in which it had begun; Lovet evading, under cover of his habitual jesting repartees, any direct answer to unpleasant questions. Upon some points, however, Algernon Grey

pressed him somewhat hard, asking if the Electress had made any change in her arrangements; and, when he said, laughing, "I am not one of her counsel, cousin mine," pursuing the inquiry by demanding, "Has she made any that you know of, William?"

"Oh, a hundred," answered Lovet; "she goes in a carriage instead of on horseback, they tell me: her gown is to be green instead of pink—but, good faith! I must away. I shall see you, doubtless, ere you go to sleep, though strong repose to-night will be needful; for we shall have busy days before us; and, if the devil has not grown old and lazy, there is work ready carved out to occupy every minute of the next two years. What a happy thing it is, Algernon, that there is a devil; were it not for him the waters of the world would stagnate and get all over duck-weed, like a standing pool. Nay, do not look grave, grim cousin; adieu! adieu!" and away he went, leaving Algernon Grey to make his arrangements for the following morning as best he could.

Habituated, however, as the young Englishman had been from his very boyhood to command and direct, no great difficulties attended his course. He found that the great court of the castle was appointed for the assembling of all gentlemen of noble birth, who were to accompany the Elector towards Prague; and that all who brought military retainers to his aid were to direct their followers to assemble in the market-place, and to join the royal party in order, as it descended from the palace. All his commands were soon given. Three of his servants were, by this time, well acquainted with the town of Heidelberg. Everything was prepared over night; and, after waiting for the return of his cousin till the clock had struck eleven, Algernon Grey retired to rest.

He had ordered himself to be called at half-past five on the following morning; but, somewhat before that hour, picking his way through the anti-chamber, Lovet knocked hard at his door, shouting, "Up, Algernon, up! The people are swarming to the castle, like bees to a hive. Let us go with them, or we may get stung;" and away he went again to finish his own preparations. In about three quarters of an hour more, the two cousins were riding up the hill, followed only by the servants necessary to hold their horses; and, passing a number of gentlemen not so well mounted as themselves, they reached the gates, where their names were demanded and compared with a list in the porter's hands. On giving those which they had assumed, instant admission was afforded to the two gentlemen themselves; their servants and horses being left with a crowd of others without. In the court some forty or fifty gentlemen were found assembled; and, assuredly, no want of enthusiastic hope appeared amongst them. All were cheerful, all were full of busy activity; each man encouraged his neighbor, each man strove to excite in others the same glad expectations that were sporting wildly in his own bosom.

Lovet seemed, during his cousin's absence, to have made a very general acquaintance amongst the principal personages of the electoral court. Hardly a face presented itself in the grey light of the early morning, of which he did not seem

to have some knowledge; and to every third or fourth man he spoke, or gave some sign of recognition. He appeared, indeed, to have become extremely popular, his jests, whether delivered in exceedingly bad German, or good French, were laughed at and enjoyed; and, as the two cousins passed on, it was evident, as so frequently occurs in life, that the worthy and the high minded were regarded with cold doubt; while the one certainly the least estimable was met with pleasure and regard. It must not be denied that Algernon Grey in some degree felt this difference, not very painfully, it is true; but still he thought, "This is, in some degree, my own fault. I have suffered circumstances with which the world has nothing to do to affect my demeanour to the world,—I must change this and be myself again. The time was when I could be as gay as Lovet, though in a different way. I will see whether those days cannot come again."

As he thus thought, he saw the powerful form of the Baron of Obertraut crossing the court-yard towards them; and, instantly advancing to meet him, he grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Ah, my good friend," said the young Englishman, "I rejoice to see you well enough to ride with us."

But Obertraut shook his head. "Alas!" he said, "I am not to be one of the party. It is judged dangerous for me to undertake so long a journey; and, if I am not summoned to Bohemia, it would seem the intention of my Prince to confer upon me a charge here, honourable, but somewhat inactive, I fear; and yet, when I consider what is likely, what dark clouds are gathering in the horizon, and what the policy, though not the honour, of the Catholic league may induce them to do, I think I may find work for myself yet; nevertheless I envy you, who are going at once to busy scenes, and trust I shall be permitted to follow soon; but still, before you go, let me make you known to one or two of those you may most esteem amongst your companions. Follow me for a moment; there stands Christian of Anhalt, and with him one or two others of the best."

The young baron's tone had, as the reader may have perceived, undergone a complete change. The quick and fiery spirit, the daring and energetic character, remained unaltered, as the whole of the rest of his life proved; but the first check he had received in life had worked most beneficially in subduing the arrogance which had been generated by long-continued success, and a sense of superiority to most of those around him. With a generous heart and an intelligent mind, even towards Algernon Grey himself, he felt very different sensations from those which any ordinary man would have experienced. He entertained a sense of gratitude towards him for the better sensations which he had been the means of producing; and he felt a noble anxiety to show, that so far from regarding the young Englishman's conduct with any lingering discourtesy, he looked upon it rather with admiration and respect.

Following him across the court-yard, Algernon was soon introduced to several of the most distinguished of the friends of the young king

of Bohemia; but, while speaking with the elder prince of Anhalt, a voice from the steps summoned two or three of the principal noblemen by name to the presence of the Elector; and, in a few minutes after, the same tongue called upon Lord Craven, Master Algernon Grey, and several other foreign gentlemen, to present themselves for a moment.

Conversing with his friend Lord Craven, Algernon was conducted to one of the great halls in the building of Ottho Henry, where, in the midst of much bustle and some confusion, he found Frederic the Fifth booted and spurred for his departure, with a number of gentlemen standing round, and the Electress-Mother, with one or two ladies of the court, at a little distance. Elizabeth of England was not present; and over the group around Louisa Juliana, the young Englishman's eye roamed in vain, seeking the form of Agnes Herbert. At that parting moment his heart longed for a few words more, for one last sight of that fair face, for the sound, if but for an instant, of that melodious voice.

As he approached, Frederic was turning as if to speak with his mother, but, his eye lighting upon Lord Craven and the rest, he paused to speak with them, separately, for a moment or two. His principal object in calling them to his presence seemed but to conciliate regard by an act of courtesy; and to each he had something kind and graceful to say, with that winning manner which is always powerful to obtain regard, but not always to command obedience.

"Ah, my unknown friend," he said, when Algernon's turn came, "I was sure you would not fail me; and, when I heard of your arrival last night, it gave me great pleasure, but no surprise. What men can you count upon from England?"

"I have only fifteen with me at present, sir," answered Algernon Grey; "but I think I can promise that the number in Prague, ere a month, will be fifty; and those not only men fit to bear arms, but to train others, should need be; for they have been taught in a good school, and practised in some sharp encounters."

"Thanks, thanks," replied the king of Bohemia; "that is a most serviceable addition to our force—wait, and we will go down with you. You will ride near us, that we may have some conversation with you as we go."

He then turned to his mother, and, taking her in his arms, embraced her with every mark of strong affection. "Farewell, my dearest mother!" he said, while the tears rose in his eyes: "God protect you and me! Under Him, it is to you I look for the safety of this fair land I am leaving."

The Electress did not reply, but pressed her son warmly to her heart, and then, wringing his hand hard, pressed her overflowing eyes upon his shoulder. After a few moments, Frederic gently disengaged himself, and took a step away, turned for another embrace, and then, bursting from her, strode across the hall, followed by the crowd of gentlemen around.

The Electress gazed after him with a sad and solemn look, then clasped her hands without lifting her bended head, and exclaimed, "There goes the Palatinate into Bohemia."

The Elector paused not to listen, for he felt his emotions overpowering him; and, doubtless, the sound of many feet drowned the words ere they reached his ears. As soon as he appeared in the court, a shout, not like an English cheer, but sufficiently expressive of gratulation, welcomed his approach; and a number of voices exclaimed, "Long live Frederic, King of Bohemia!"

The Emperor raised his plumed hat and bowed, exclaiming the next moment,—"To horse, gentlemen, to horse! There are too many sweet ties and dear memories here. We must break away;" and, crossing the court on foot, he passed for the last time through the deep archway of his hereditary castle, followed by the crowd of noble and enthusiastic gentlemen who had assembled to accompany him, and sprang upon the back of a magnificent horse, which two grooms, running in haste, led up to the farther side of the drawbridge.

His followers hurried to mount; and in a moment after, the cavalcade was descending the hill. The fresh and fiery chargers were eager to dash on; some reared and plunged: some pulled hard at the rein; but, strange to say, the horse of the young King, though unquestionably the finest and most powerful animal of the whole group, full of life, vigour, and activity, stumbled at the first step and well nigh fell. Never, even in the augury-loving days of the old Romans, was there a time when omens of any kind were more eagerly watched, or produced a deeper impression on the minds of men; and it was easy to see a grave and distressed look spread over the countenances of many of the young monarch's followers, as they marked this untoward accident.

"That is unfortunate," said the younger Christian of Anhalt, who was riding near Algernon Grey.

"Nay, rather fortunate that the horse did not fall," replied the Englishman; "but do you really put any faith in such indications?"

"Not I," answered the Prince; "but omens often make misfortunes, though they don't predict them. The courage of half a score among us is already cooled by that horse's stumble; and I have heard of a battle lost by the first look of a comet's tail. Heaven send us no more such auguries, or we shall reach Prague with cold hearts."

"Mine is cold enough already," answered Algernon Grey, who had determined, on the expedition before him, to throw away the reserve which had so long overshadowed him, and cultivate, by frankness, the regard of those who were to be his companions for many months; "mine is cold enough already, though. Heaven knows, not cold in the cause of your noble Prince."

"Ay, and what has chilled it?" asked Christian of Anhalt.

"Many things," answered Algernon Grey, with a faint smile; "some treachery, some disappointment, some burdensome bonds, formed by good, misjudging friends, which can neither be broken nor shaken off."

"A bad case," answered Christian of Anhalt; "but, methinks, were I you, I would never suffer things that cannot be mended to weigh down my light free heart, but would rather throw them

back upon fate's hands, and be merry in spite of fortune."

"A good philosophy," answered Algernon Grey; "and I am resolved to try it; but yet you may one day find it difficult to practise what you teach."

"Nay, not a whit," replied his companion. "We may learn philosophy even from the brute beasts; they sigh not over the morrow or the yesterday. It is only because we make curses of powers that were given for blessings, and use our memory and our foresight, not for warning and precaution, but for regret and despair."

"Excellent good," cried Lovet, who was riding but a step behind. "The same doctrine I have been preaching to him for the last two months! Me he would never listen to; now he will be all docility; for a prophet is no prophet in his own country, and a cousin's counsels, like the ale of the servants' hall, always taste pickled to the master of the house."

"There is some difference between your sage advice, William, and our noble comrade's," answered Algernon Grey.

"Not a bit," cried Lovet. "Enjoy the present: forget the past; let the future take care of itself. Such is the cream of the morality of each; and you only think otherwise because a stale pie tastes fresh upon a clean napkin. But here we are coming to the square. On my life, a mighty fine body of men, and in good order, too. There must have been a shrewd head to marshal them."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE morning was fair, but sultry; the pace at which the cavalcade proceeded was, for several miles, very quick; and the exhilarating effect of rapid motion would probably again have raised the spirits of all, had it not been for a certain oppressive feeling in the air, which rendered the application of the spur necessary, even to strong and high-blooded horses, at the end of five miles. Algernon Grey felt the influence of the atmosphere as much as any one. In vain he endeavoured to shake off the gloom that hung over him, to laugh and talk with those around, to give back to Lovet jest for jest; the thoughts which he wished to banish would return and struggle to possess him wholly. We all know we must all have felt the influence of particular states of air, not alone upon our corporeal frame, but also upon the very energies of the mind; when, without losing in the slightest degree our power over the intellect, we cannot command that finer and more supple element in our complicated nature—whatever it be called—which gives birth to the feelings of the moment. Reason is vain against it; resolution is useless; we may govern the external display, but we cannot avoid the internal sensation; and a lustrous brightness, or a dim cloud, spreads over every subject of contemplation from some hidden source of light and shadow within us. Who can say, "I will be merry to-day!" The man who does so is a fool; for not the brightest gifts of fortune, not the sunshine of all external things, not every

effort of a strong determination, not the exercise of wit, wisdom, and philosophy, will enable him to succeed, unless the spirit of cheerfulness be in his own heart. He may say, "I will be calm;" and many a man has been so, in the midst of intense sufferings, to the eye of the world. Many a man, perhaps, has been so in his own opinion; but I much doubt whether some one of the many modifications of vanity was not, even then, putting a cheat upon himself.

With Algernon Grey the effort was vain; he felt depressed, and he struggled against the depression; but the enemy conquered, and, foot by foot, gained ground upon him. First, he gave way so far as to think of Agnes Herbert, to dwell upon the recollection of her beauty and her excellence. Then he strove to cast his eyes forward into the future, and to think alone of the coming events; but what a sad contrast did they present to the images just banished! war, and strife, and the fiery turbulence of ambition, and the low, mean intrigues of courts, and cold pagantry, and idle reveling; instead of beauty, and love, and hope, and sweet domestic peace! It was too painful to rest upon; and his mind turned to her he loved again; but the same bright visions, in which he had indulged for a moment, would not come back at his bidding. He thought of Agnes, it is true; but at the same time he remembered that he was leaving her for ever; that he was voluntarily casting away the early joy of first love, the only refuge in which his heart could now find peace, the sweetest light that had ever dawned upon existence, all that imagination could have pictured of happiness and contentment. And deep, deep, to his very heart, he felt the sacrifice; and his spirit writhed in the torture which he inflicted on himself. "Should he really never see her more?" he asked himself; "or should he see her again, but as the wife of another?" There was agony and despair in the very thought; and yet, what could he do? how could he act to prevent it? how could he shut out that terrible but too certain conviction? It was impossible to change his hard fate. It was impossible even to dream that it would be changed; and in the end he gave himself up to dull and heavy despondency. His feelings had been grave and sad even when he came to Heidelberg. He had believed that he was destined to go through life unloving and unbeloved, linked to one whose reported conduct was, to say the least, light; whom he only remembered as a proud, haughty child; whom he only knew by the evil rumours which had reached him. But since that time a light had arisen on the darkness of such feelings, to go out as suddenly as it had been kindled, and leave the night tenfold more gloomy than before. He had learned to love, but without hope; and what state can be more terrible to a young and passionate heart!

On such things he pondered as they rode along, and they soon absorbed his whole attention. He marked not with any degree of accuracy the road they took; he hardly saw the houses, or the trees, or the mountains as they passed. He marked not the passing hours, or the changes of the light and sky. But there were others in the train whose eyes were

more busily employed; and amongst them were those of his own servants, who, with less to occupy their thoughts, felt, or seemed to feel, the fatigues of the way and the oppression of the sultry atmosphere far more than their lord.

"It is mighty hot, Tony," said Frill, the page, wiping his brow with a delicate kerchief; "and methinks the folks are riding exceedingly fast, considering the sultriness of the temperature, and the capability of their quadrupeds."

"Ay, good lack, it is hot," answered the servant; "but the quadrupeds, as you call them, Master Frill, can bear it quite as well as the two-legged beasts perched upon them. There thou art now thyself, mounted upon the tall roan, with thy red-heeled riding boots sticking out from under thy cloak, like a small Cornish crow upon the back of a big sheep; and losing much moisture from thy brow and temples, while the good beast has hardly turned a hair. Now, I will warrant thee, Frill, thou art thinking in a miserly spirit of the world of essences and perfumed soap it will cost to cleanse thee of all this dust; but I will console thee, Frill; I will relieve thy mind. Thy conscience shall be spared the small sin of pilfering odours out of our lord's saddle-bags."

"I have no need to pilfer, Tony," answered the boy; "I leave that to you. I have got all I want in my own saddle-bags, and ask nothing but a little fair water."

"That thou shalt have in abundance, Frill," replied his companion; "and sooner, perchance, than thou thinkest; for, if you great leaden cloud lie not, thou shalt have water enough, within an hour, as to spare thee all future washing for the day, and make thee forewear all such liquids for a month to come."

"It looks marvellous like it," answered Frill, eyeing the heavens, with a somewhat rueful look.

"Like it, but not marvellous, friend Frill," answered Tony; "thunderstorms will come in most countries of the world; and rain will fall; and wind will blow; and grass will spring up with its universal evergreen; and pages will say flat things in pleasant tones, and think themselves mighty wise in their estate."

"Do you think it will thunder, Tony?" asked the youth, in a tone which made the older servant fancy he was somewhat apprehensive.

"Ay, that it will," replied Tony; "it will thunder to your heart's content. I should not wonder if we saw half a dozen of those gay lords struck with the lightning. I have seldom seen so great a bellyful of thunderbolts as that one up there."

"If it do, Tony, there's a good creature, just catch the bridle of my horse; for I doubt if I have strength to hold him. Saw you not how he plunged and passed just as we were setting out? I swung my two arms nearly off to keep him in."

"Oh, I will put to a stronger arm in case of need," answered Tony. "I thought your horse and all would have been over into the valley, at which I should have rejoiced with sincere friendship, as an honourable and distinguished death for one so young. But here I must take

care that you do not die in a by-road like a pilgrim's donkey, and so I'll stop your beast's capering if he should be riotous. But mark you, master Frill, how our friend with the hawk's eyes is plying our lord and his cousin with sweet talk. Now I will not give the value of a goose's egg for anything that he says; but yet be you certain, good friend Frill, that he says nothing without an object. It would be worth something to know what that object is; for then one could watch his working for it."

"Can he be wishing to get our lord killed," asked Frill, "if he puts him upon such expeditions as these?"

"Not so, master page," answered Tony; "first, because he did not put him upon this expedition. I heard him arguing reasonably enough one day against his going."

"Ay," answered Frill; "but I saw a boy in the street of Heidelberg, driving a large old bear, and when he wanted him to go on, he pulled him back by a string round his hind leg."

"A savoury comparison for our noble master," said Tony; "but yet there may be some truth in it;" and, scratching his head, with one finger thrust under his broad hat, he meditated for a moment or two. "No, no," he continued, at length, "he could gain nothing by it; that's not his object. He is but his cousin by the side of the woman. The title dies with our lord, if he has no children; and the estates go to the Howards. It would be worse for him, rather than better, if he died; for I know he borrows money from time to time. It can't be that, Master Frill."

"I'll tell you what, Tony," replied the boy; "I think you might get something from old Paul Watson, who joined us with the rest at Mannheim. He was bred up in the Lady Susan's household, and Sir William is always down there, I hear."

"Get something from Paul Watson?" cried Tony. "Get juice out of a stone! Why, I do not believe he has ten words to give to any man; but I'll try, notwithstanding. He knows, I dare say, if he would but speak; for these silent fellows use their eyes, if not their tongues. Let us ride up to him and hear what he will say. On my life, I wish the storm would come down, for this heat is unbearable."

Thus saying, he pushed on his horse at the side of the cavalcade, till he reached the spot where a well-equipped body of armed men was moving along in the Elector's train. The difference of their accoutrements and the figures of their horses, combining great bone and strength with agility, marked them out for English soldiers; and, drawing in his rein by the side of a man some fifty years of age, with grey hair and moustache, Tony commenced a conversation, saying, "Well, Paul, I have not seen you for more than nine months; how has it gone with you since?"

"Well," answered the man, scarcely looking round.

"And what have you been about ever since?" asked Tony.

"Many things," replied Paul Watson.

"You have been down at the Lady Susan's, I hear," continued Tony, "in your old haunts, Master Watson. I dare say you enjoyed yourself mightily."

"Yes," answered his companion.

"Was Sir William down there then?" continued Tony, in a careless manner.

Paul Watson nodded his head.

"I wonder what is his object in going about with our lord here, after letting him wander so many years by himself," said Tony, musingly.

"Don't know," replied Paul Watson.

"What was he about so long down there?" was Tony's next question; and to this he got the only satisfactory answer he had yet received.

"Making love to the lady," answered his companion, with a grin and a sort of gasp, as if the number of words, though they would be spoken, half choked him in the utterance.

"Oh, oh!" cried Tony, his eyes lighting up with intelligence; but he had no opportunity of inquiring farther; for one of the Elector's officers, riding along the line, motioned him to fall back, saying, "Keep the order, keep the order!"

Tony obeyed; for although he might have liked to inquire farther, yet these few words gave him the key to many a secret. Frill, who, notwithstanding a certain portion of page-like affectation, was a shrewd, clever youth, had remained in his place, thinking it much better that Tony should go on alone, trusting to obtain from him any information he might acquire by one means or another, after his return.

"I would not come with you, Tony," he said; "for if Paul will but speak little before one, he will speak nothing before two. What has he told you?"

"Little enough," answered Tony; "but now take care of your beast, Master Frill; for here comes down the storm."

A large heavy drop or two fell, as he spoke, spotting the dust upon their horses' coats; and, the next instant, a broad flash of lightning shot across the whole sky, changing the lurid mass of cloud, which by this time had crept up over the zenith, into one wide expanse of flame. At first the thunder followed slowly after the flash, leaving a long interval between; but, ere many minutes were over, the roar was almost incessant; the sky, scarcely for an instant free from lightning, echoed from mountains to woods; the crash of the thunder was really terrific; and that storm, which accompanied Frederic on his way to claim the crown of Bohemia, is recorded by all annalists as the most tremendous that ever visited the Palatinate. To describe it is impossible; but we may comprehend what was its intensity, when we learn that men accustomed to every kind of danger felt overawed by the strange and terrible phenomena they witnessed; and, to use the words of the chronicler, "thought that the end of the world had come." The fierce flame of lightning half blinded both horses and men; the fierce livid streaks of fire shot incessantly down from the sky; and, darting amidst the forests, rent many of the strongest trees to atoms. Balls of flame passed hissing through the air, and exploded with a sound like the discharge of large ordnance; while the continued roll of the thunder deafened the ear; and every now and then a crash, as if mighty rocks had been cast down into an echoing vault, broke through the less intense sounds and seemed to shake

the very earth. The rain, too, came down in torrents, now and then mingled with hail; but, far from mitigating the fury of the storm, it seemed only to aggravate its rage.

At first the horses plunged, and darted hither and thither, and a scene of indescribable confusion took place in the cavalcade; but, after a time, they seemed cowed into tranquillity, and, with drooping heads and hanging ears, plodded on, with torrents of rain streaming off their coats.

For seven hours—from nine till four—the war of elements continued, without the slightest abatement; and then another hour was passed, with the thunder roaring at a greater distance, and the lightning streaming more faintly, after which succeeded dull heavy rain. Still, throughout the whole, the young King of Bohemia pursued his way; spurring on wherever it was possible, as fast as the weary and discouraged horses would go. Once only he paused, in a small town, to take some refreshment and rest; but in three-quarters of an hour he was on the way again, and drew not a rein till, just as night was falling, and a faint streak of yellow light was seen to the westward under the dull canopy of cloud, some towers and steeples were seen, at the distance of about two miles; and Christian of Anhalt, pointing on as he rode by Algernon Grey, exclaimed, "Thank God! there is our resting-place. This has, indeed, all been very unfortunate."

"It has, truly," answered the young Englishman; "and the more so, if you have formed a right judgment of the superstitious feelings of your countrymen."

"It is of that, alone, I speak," answered the Prince. "Who minds a heavy shower of rain, or a thunder-storm, as far as he is personally concerned! But yet half of the people here are already drawing evil prognostications from a stumbling horse and the usual result of a month of hot weather. When the priests and the ladies arrive, too, it will be worse; for, if men are too much given to superstition, women and clergymen know no end of it—always, excepting our fair Queen, whose own high soul is her omen of success. I wonder where our quarters are marked out. You are in the same inn with me, I hear. My father lodges with the King in the town-house. Where they are to put us all, in this small place, I know not—especially after the Queen and the rest have arrived."

"Does she come hither to-night?" asked Algernon Grey, in some surprise.

"Yes; but it will be late," replied his companion. "She comes by the other road; it is further round, but less hilly, and relays of horses are prepared for her. Here! Herr von Alfeld," he continued, addressing a gentleman who was riding by, "know you where my quarters lie?"

"One of the inns in the market-place," replied the officer to whom he spoke, "is marked for you, the Lord Craven, and two other English gentlemen, with your trains. I will tell you the name;" and he looked at the paper in his hand, but the light was too faint to enable him to see; and, after a moment's thought, he said, "It is the Star excellent, sir—I remem-

ber now : it is the Star, on the left hand of the market."

He then rode on ; and in a few minutes began the scene of hurry and confusion inevitably produced by the entrance of a large and long expected party into a small town, notwithstanding every precautionary measure to provide for their accommodation. The rain had just ceased ; all the inhabitants were at their doors or windows ; the innumerable signs which hung from house to house across the narrow streets—for the most part crowned with garlands—alook showers of large drops upon all who passed below ; boys and girls ran beside the horses, shouting and screaming ; horse-boys and drawers rushed out of inns and taverns ; torches and lanterns flashed here and there ; and the young king's harbingers, who had been sent on the preceding day, coming forth to conduct the different parties to the quarters prepared for them, aided to banish everything like order from the cavalcade. Frederic himself, and the part of the train immediately attached to his person, of course found no difficulty ; but all the other gentlemen dispersed, eagerly seeking their lodging, and calling loudly to their men to follow ; while every innkeeper who had a single chamber unappropriated strove to mislead some of the stragglers into his house, assuring them that there was the place engaged for them.

"Come on, Grey, with me," said Christian of Anhalt, between whom and Algernon had sprung up a feeling of friendship, which went on increasing to the end of their lives. "Call your men together, as they are strangers, and bid them follow close, with your cousin. My people can take care of themselves, as they have good broad German tongues in their heads. I can find my way to this Star, for I have been here before. The market-place is straight on, where the King is going."

Algernon's orders were soon given ; Lovet rode up to his side, the servants and his little band of soldiers came up close behind, pushing through the crowd with a quiet regularity which excited the admiration of the young Prince of Anhalt, and in a few minutes they were in the midst of the market-place, which was large and commodious considering the smallness of the town. The town-house was directly opposite, and innumerable lights were running along the front from window to window, showing that the Prince was already within ; but as Christian of Anhalt was looking from side to side to discover the sign of the Star, a man in a citizen's dress, with a long grey beard came up to the side of his horse, saying, "This way, Highness. Here are your quarters at my inn."

"What is it called?" asked the Prince. "Is it the Star?"

"No, sir, the Golden Cup," answered the landlord.

"That will not do, then," replied Christian : "ours is the Star. It must be there, Grey, on the right—come on ;" and without waiting for the remonstrances of the host of the Golden Cup, he pushed his horse forward, and soon saw a golden star hanging from the face of a large house apparently covered all over with grotesque paintings in fresco.

"Now, noble lords, now, what is your pleas-

ure?" asked the landlord, who was standing at his door with two serving boys.

"Meat, drink, lodging, and a fire to dry our wet cloaks," answered Christian of Anhalt, springing from his horse, and walking into the passage, followed by Algernon Grey and Lovet.

"Meat, and drink, and fire, you shall have, noble gentlemen," replied the good man ; "but lodging I cannot give, for the whole house is taken by the king's harbingers for—"

"For us," added the young Prince, interrupting him, and entering a hall on the right, from which a cheerful blaze broke forth. "Quick, my good host, set what you can before us, and especially good wine ; and send out one of your boys to take care of our men without. Here, Grey, let us dry what Scultetus calls the outer man, while they bring us something to warm the inner man.—What, in the devil's name, do you stand for, host ! Do you want us to use cold iron that you stay gaping there !"

The host ran out alarmed, and, after a moment or two, some of the servants brought in several dishes of smoking viands, with three flasks of wine. But, as the party of travellers sat down, Algernon Grey, judging by the scared looks of the attendants, whispered to the Prince, "I think there must be some mistake here. Are you sure that Herr Von Alfeld is to be depended upon !"

"By my life, I know not," replied Christian of Anhalt ; "but, right or wrong, I sup before I move. Ho ! drawer, where is your master ! Send him here !"

"He is gone, noble sir, to seek one of the harbingers," replied the lad, in a humble tone : "he thinks there is some mistake."

"There can be no mistake about this stewed hare," cried Lovet, "unless it be a cat disguised, and even then it smells too savoury to be acquired into. Shall I help your Highness !"

"With all my heart," replied Christian of Anhalt : "cat or devil, I will eat it, if it be tender. Out with those corks, knaves ! Now, success to our expedition, and long live Frederic, King of Bohemia. This inn is mighty quiet, it must be confessed. I thought to find the hall tenanted by a score. I fear we have got into some reserved chase, and are poaching upon a private larder ; but no matter, so that hunger be satisfied and the wet kept out."

With such light talk passed away about half an hour, at the end of which time the landlord reappeared with a tall personage whom the prince of Anhalt recognised as one of Frederic's attendants ; and saluting him with a gay laugh, he exclaimed, "Well, William of Waldhof, if we are in a wrong nest, it is all Alfeld's fault : he told me that the Star was to be our quarters, as my English friend can witness."

"He mistook, noble sir," answered the other ; "he should have said the Golden Cup. But it matters not, my prince, for the present. This inn is for the Queen's ladies, who cannot lodge in the town-house ; but they are not expected for some hours, so finish your supper, in Heaven's name, and then at your convenience betake yourself to the inn just opposite. I will go and see that all is ready for you, and put your men in possession ; for I passed, I think, some forty of them at the door."

"Thunder and devils !" cried Christian of

Anhalt, turning to the host, "what left you them at the doors for?"

"I had no place for them, your Highness," answered the man, in a humble tone; and William of Wulford stepping in to quiet the prince's anger, the latter sat down again to the table, from which he had started up, and recommenced his meal with a degree of hunger which was not easily satisfied. Wine, and meat, and game disappeared with wonderful celerity; for neither Lovet nor Algernon Grey had tasted anything since they left Heidelberg, and the distance was considerably more than fifty miles: a long journey, in those days of evil roads and tortuous paths. Christian of Anhalt drank deep, and Lovet did not fear to follow his example, for he loved the wine-cup, though, to say the truth, it had little effect upon him. On the young Prince it worked more potently, not that he got drunk, for he could talk and reason sensibly enough; and not even his corporeal faculties, which usually give way sooner than the mental in men accustomed to deep potations, were at all weakened. He crossed the room steadily, to fetch something that he wanted from a small pocket in his cloak; and though he shewed, towards the end of the meal, an inclination to fall asleep, yet by no other sign did he betray that he had been drinking. At length, however, as he finished the second bottle of strong old wine which had gone to his own share, he rose, saying, "I must have a nap before I go farther. Any man who is awake rouse me in an hour. If we all go to the land of dreams together, doubtless some one will come to turn us out when the ladies arrive. So, good night for the present;" and, lying down on a bench at the farther side of the hall, he was soon deep in slumber.

Had Algernon Grey given way to the strong temptation of drowning the memory of many cares in the sparkling juice, that but raises the spirits to depress them more terribly afterwards, he might perhaps have found the same thoughtless repose; but he had avoided the wine, as was his custom; and, after seeing the young Prince sinking to sleep, he turned to Lovet, saying, "We must see for these horses you sent on, William. Doubtless they will be needed early to-morrow. Know you where they are to be found?"

"Not I," answered William Lovet; "how could I tell the names of inns in a place which seems to consist of little else? I told the German fellow you sent with them to do the best he could for them; and, on my life, I think you had better stay till we get to the other place, and then send out some of the men to hunt. Here is a bottle and a half of wine still to be drunk, and I shall take my share, lest we do not find anything so good where we are going."

"No, no," answered Algernon Grey; "I like to be prepared. You stay and watch our young friend there, drinking the wine meanwhile, and I will go and see what can be done to find the means of mounting us all to-morrow. My charger will not hold out much longer over such roads."

Thus saying, he turned and quitted the inn, leaving his cloak to dry before the great fire; and, wandering out into the streets, had, in about three-quarters of an hour, discovered the

small public-house, with its long range of stabling, where his fresh horses had been put up; and, giving what orders he thought necessary, returned slowly towards the Star. The whole town was still full of bustle; people passing about in all directions, torches and lanterns flitting from door to door; and, as Algernon Grey came forth from the doors of the stables, he thought he heard a rolling sound, something like the beat of a distant drum. On approaching the town-house, however, he saw several large heavy carriages drawn up before it, a number of horses, and ten or fifteen servants busily unloading a quantity of luggage. Concluding at once that the Queen had arrived, he hurried into the Star, the passage of which was deserted, and, turning to the right, opened the door of the eating-hall, and went in. The large room had now only one tenant, and that was a lady, who, standing with her back towards him, gazed into the fire, with her left hand leaning on his own cloak, cast over the tall back of a chair to dry. Algernon Grey's heart beat; for, although wrapped up in mantles, and with a veil over the head, the lines of the figure were difficult to discern, yet there was something in the graceful attitude into which it had fallen, with the one small foot crossed over the other, and the hand resting so lightly on the chair for support that it seemed scarcely to touch it, which impressed him at once with the certainty of who it was. At the first sound of his step in the room, Agnes turned round; and, with irrepressible joy in his heart and in his face—joy against which reason had no power—her lover sprang forward and took her hand.

There was equal pleasure in the countenance of Agnes Herbert, and she thanked him with bright smiles for coming to see her so soon; so that it was hard for Algernon to explain that he did not know she was to form one of the train to the young Queen.

"I thought you must have known that long ago," replied the lady. "There was a doubt at one time whether I should accompany her or not, and as my uncle expressed no wish for me to stay, the Electress mother urged me to go, and, of course, I could not refuse."

"It is fated," thought Algernon Grey; "it is fated! What use of struggling against such events? I will do naught that I can regret or be ashamed of, but I will make myself inaccessible no more by a constant war with my own heart."

He remained with Agnes for more than an hour, for half an hour nearly alone; and, when the Countess of Löwenstein and two other ladies joined them, he still lingered, giving aid in all their arrangements, listening to the details, of which they were full, of the perils and discomforts of the way, and cheering them with gay and lively conversation full of hope and expectation for the future. Only one of the four ladies before present had ever spoken with him before; but to her his present demeanour and conversation were altogether new and strange; it was different from anything she had seen or heard in him before, but not less pleasing. Her mind required soothing and cheering; it sought to revive hope and kindle expectation, but found within itself no resources to effect such an object; and as with graceful

case and varied powers he painted the coming time in the brightest colours, and showed the future prospect on the fairest side, she listened, half convinced that her uncle's dark apprehensions were vain, and that, with such men as the one before her to aid, direct, and support a noble and a holy cause, success could not fail to follow, and all would end in victory and peace.

At length, it was announced that the rooms above were ready; for, with a somewhat national spirit of delay, but few preparations had been made, under the idea that the Queen would not arrive till midnight; and Algernon Grey threw his cloak over his shoulder to depart, saying, "Rest must be very needful to you all, fair ladies; for it must have been a weary journey to you."

"Far more tiresome," answered Agnes, "to all, than if we had come on horseback, as we should have done some five or ten years ago. I hate these carriages for travelling; they are well enough in a procession, or to go through a town; but, for a road, I think the old way is best."

"Had we come in the old fashion," said the Countess of Löwenstein, "we should have been melted, like sugar-candy, with all the rain that has fallen."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Algernon Grey, laughing; "for then there would have been a world of sweetness wasted on the high road;" and, seeing them to the foot of the stairs, he retired, leaving no unfavourable impression upon the minds of all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I MUST now, for one brief chapter, quit the course of narrative I have been hitherto pursuing, and, instead of detailing, day by day, the actions and feelings of the personages in whom I have endeavoured to interest the reader, give a short sketch of the events of one whole year, dwelling principally upon the facts of general history; but, in the end, endeavouring to sum up, in a very few words, all those changes which have taken place in the relative position of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert.

As is well known to every one acquainted with German history, Frederic, King of Bohemia, pursued his journey on horseback on the following morning to the small town of Altdorf, riding but one horse from Heidelberg to that place;* thence he went to Amberg, and thence again to Waldsachsen, joined on the road by many friends, and was met at the latter town, which was then the last of the Upper Palatinate, by the deputies of the States of Bohemia. At Waldsachsen and Amberg some days were passed; but at length, in the middle of October, the young King, with a train almost swelled to the amount of an army,

crossed the Bohemian frontier, and entered the town of Egra; from Egra he was conducted in triumphal procession, amidst the shouts and congratulations of the people, the boisterous joy of the rude nobility of the realm, and the wild enthusiasm of the Protestant party, to the gates of the fine old town of Prague. In the immediate vicinity of the city rises a hill, called the Weissenberg, or White-mountain; and beneath it is a splendid promenade, named the Star. At the foot of that mountain, which was destined to be the field where all the bright hopes then entertained were destroyed; and on the beautiful walk of the Star, soon to be drenched with the blood of many that then surrounded him in joy, and health, and high-souled expectation, the train of the young monarch halted, and was met by an immense concourse of the citizens, with the states and magistrates at their head. Two thousand horse escorted Frederic into the town; ambassadors from many other states were present; the nobility of the whole land assembled to do honour to their sovereign; and four hundred of the ancient Hussites, armed, after the fashion of the times of old, with hauberks of chained mail with lances, and double-handed swords at their back, formed a sort of body-guard, bearing in the midst the enormous banner of the unconquerable Ziiska, emblazoned with a cup, stained and dusty from the many fields in which he had led on his fierce followers to the slaughter, but raising high hopes of conquest and success by the memory of past victories, and invincible resistance. The air rang with shouts; drums and trumpets sounded around; confidence, resolution, enthusiasm, were in every heart; and thus, in the midst of *letitia publica*, as Cæsar calls it, was Frederic conducted into the capital of his new kingdom, over which it was to reign but one short year.

The coronation of the King and the Queen shortly followed; and for a brief period it was joy, and pagantry, and success; but the reverse was speedily coming; the day-dream was quickly to be dispelled; and all the evil that the monarch's mother had foreseen gathered, like thunder-clouds, around him.

At first, nothing could equal the popularity both of the King and Queen; her beauty, her grace, her kindness won all hearts; and the population, from high to low, almost worshipped her as she passed. The gentle demeanour of the King, too, conciliated regard. His light and happy spirit shed sunshine around; his dignified air and handsome person concealed the weakness of a character irresolute, though personally brave; and his happy language and easy eloquence covered, as it so frequently the case, the want of more important powers, judgment, and foresight, and discretion. Gradually, however, as events of great delicacy called for just and immediate action, the showy qualities were reduced to their right value in the minds of men; the great deficiency of more sterling abilities became apparent. This followed doubt and regret at the choice that had been made. Selfish interests raised themselves up to struggle for temporary advantage under a weak and facile prince. Gloomy discontent followed disappointment; and apathy succeeded enthusiasm in his cause. When-

* Some letters, from a person who pretended to be an eye-witness, state that Frederic accompanied the Queen and the rest of the court from Heidelberg to Amberg, in a train of eighteen carriages; but it is beyond all doubt that he, and the gentlemen who accompanied him, rode the whole way. The King himself performed the journey to Altdorf, near two hundred miles, on one horse; there the poor beast fell dead, and the stuffed skin was to be seen for many years in the library of that place.

ever such is the case, treason is not far behind. Still, all might have gone well, had a weak king been surrounded by wise friends; had his counsellors, firm with his enemies, moderate with his supporters, imparted that vigour and that discretion to his actions which his own character could not supply. Unfortunately, the exact reverse was the case. Camerarius was weak, though subtle, selfish, and interested; Christian of Anhalt the elder, though a brave and skilful soldier, was little more than a soldier; Dohna was suffered to take but little share in the management of affairs; and the Prince of Lohms was not equal to the great emergencies of the time. The man, however, who contributed more than all the rest to the ruin of his sovereign's prospects, was he who had urged him most strongly to accept the perilous position which he occupied. Filled with the wildest spirit of fanaticism, fancying himself the prophet of a new reformation, Abraham Scultetus came with the King into Bohemia; utterly ignorant of the manners and customs of the people; unacquainted even with the relations of the different religious parties into which the population was divided. The oppression of the Austrian princes had caused the Roman Catholics of the kingdom to join with their Protestant brethren in snatching the crown from the head of a prince, whose own acts justified the States, under the express conditions which were made on receiving the sceptre, in declaring him fallen from the throne of Bohemia. But still there lingered a natural fondness in their minds for a sovereign of their own faith. These Roman Catholics formed a large part of the population, especially at Prague; the rest of the people were divided between the ancient Hussites, who were now comparatively few, and Lutherans, who were many. Of Calvinists, the number was exceedingly small. But Scultetus was one of the fiercest followers of the fierce and intolerant apostle of Geneva. Possessed with the blindest spirit of religious bigotry, he had done much evil, even in the Palatinate, where his sect was predominant; and he carried the same fiery elements of strife and confusion with him into the new kingdom which had fallen under his master's sway. His sermons were insults to the faith of almost all who surrounded him; his counsels were pernicious to the prince he served; and, after familiarizing himself, in some degree, with the habits of the citizens of Prague, he proceeded to open acts of intolerance, which bore bitter fruits ere long. The cathedral was stripped of its pictures and its statues; the great altar itself was removed; and relics and images—which many of the citizens of Prague revered, not alone as mementos of holy men, but as part of the possessions of their city—were destroyed in the night, at his instigation. The great crucifix upon the bridge of Prague was also marked out for destruction; but several of the most eminent Bohemian nobles interfered, to prevent this rash act on the part of the King; and the cross and statue were spared accordingly. The report, however, of the intention spread far and wide through Prague. It unfortunately happened that the young Queen had some time previously expressed her de-

termination never to pass over that bridge again, till the indecent practice of both sexes bathing indiscriminately in the river near was done away. The real motives, which she had frankly expressed, were supposed, by an angry and rude people, to be a mere excuse; the Jesuits dexterously contrived to point out the crucifix as the real object of her dislike; and an outcry was raised against the unhappy Princess, which spread far and wide amongst the Roman Catholic population of the town.

Having once obtained cause of complaint, the Jesuits never ceased to decry the monarch and his queen, to pervert all his actions in the public ear, and to attribute the basest motives, and even the most licentious conduct, to one who had openly confessed himself an enemy of their church. With the serpent-like subtlety of their order, they spread poisonous rumours and calumnious assertions through a thousand different channels amongst the people of Bohemia. Sometimes it was an open and daring, but perverted statement in point: such as the "Description of the spoiling of the Cathedral Church at Prague, by the Calvinistic king;" sometimes it was a mere whisper, such as that which spread amongst the Lutherans, that it was the determination of the King and Queen to abolish every form of worship in Bohemia, but that which they themselves followed. Doubts, fears, and enmities took possession of the minds of the populace; and when the storms of war began to arise, and the young monarch required all the support of an united people, he found little but discord, disaffection, and suspicion.

In the mean while the relations of the new monarch of Bohemia with all foreign powers were anything but satisfactory. True, indeed, his wife's uncle, the King of Denmark, the warlike King of Sweden, the Venetian Republic, and many princes of Germany recognised him at once as King of Bohemia. True, Bethlem Gabor, the Prince of Transylvania, promised the aid of his half savage hordes, in case of war; but James the First of England, on whose power to serve him much of his hopes had been founded, refused him even the title of king, treated him as a usurper, and would give no aid whatever in the preservation of the kingdom of Bohemia. He promised, indeed, to interfere in case the Palatinate should be attacked; but Frederic had soon occasion to learn that his father-in-law was as false and fickle, as he was vain and pusillanimous; and the only assistance he ever received from England, was afforded by the gallant enthusiasm of her young nobility, in the cause of a princess whom they loved with chivalrous devotion. France, on the other side, temporized; for it was her policy to persecute the Protestants amongst her own people, and to foment the divisions of Germany; and thus, in almost all instances, her interference in the affairs of the empire tended to weaken the Protestant League, and to give every facility to the Roman Catholics. Day by day, and hour by hour, the storm approached nearer and nearer, menacing, on the one hand, Bohemia; and on the other, the Palatinate. Large bodies of troops were raised in the Spanish Netherlands, in Burgundy, and Lorraine, under the banners of the King of

Spain; and at their head was placed the veteran, resolute and skilful, but merciless Spinola; and, on the side of Austria, several generals of renown gathered together armies, ready to fall on Bohemia at the first sound of the drum.

In the mean time, in his court at Prague, Frederic gave himself up alternately to revelry and devotion. The gallant manners of a refined court, the romantic tone which it had acquired in the Palatinate, totally discordant with the rough plainness of Bohemia, were certainly reported, and perhaps believed, to touch upon gross licentiousness; and, undoubtedly, in merriment—though there is no proof of its having been vicious, and in devout exercises—though they are not shown to have been hypocritical, Frederic passed much time which would have been more wisely expended in preparation for defence or in active attack upon an enemy who no longer preserved even the semblance of amity. His acts, also, were weak and ill timed; his negotiations tedious and unskilful. From France, Denmark, and Venice, he received nothing but vague assurances of amity. From the King of Great Britain he obtained naught but the reproaches of a pedagogue, rather than the kind support of a father; and his embassy to Turkey only served to give his enemies a pretext for accusing him of leaguings with the infidel against the Catholic emperor. Bethlem Gabor, indeed, not only promised, but prepared to espouse his cause; but history shows that so ill combined were the operations of the Transylvanians and Bohemians, that the Austrian troops had the opportunity of dealing with each separately, and paralyzing the one force before it could be supported by the other. On only one occasion, after the accession of Frederic to the throne, did the Bohemians and Transylvanians act in co-operation; and then, had perseverance and resolution been united to valour and activity, the imperial crown would, in all probability, have been snatched from the House of Austria; and the Emperor would have remained a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. The star of Frederic was not destined to rise high, however. He possessed, it is true, more amiable qualities than his rival; but Ferdinand not only displayed consummate skill, prudence, and activity himself; but had agents and counsellors all equally shrewd, unscrupulous, and diligent. The Elector of Bavaria, nearly allied to the Elector Palatine, had, beyond all doubt, given his cousin reason to believe, that his acceptance of the crown of Bohemia would not be followed by any act of hostility on his part; but he had been educated in the same school as Ferdinand, was a bigoted follower of the Roman Catholic religion, the chief of the German Roman Catholic League, and the politic claimant, under old and baseless titles, of a great part of the young king's Rhenish dominions. These were fearful odds against gratitude and kindred, in the mind of a prince educated by the Jesuits. He was soon engaged, heart and soul, in the cause of the Emperor, and used every means, just and unjust, to move the princes of the League to act against Bohemia and the Palatinate. Again, George Frederic, the Elector of Saxony, affected for a time to hold himself neutral, but that unworthy prince, it would seem, from the first leaned to

the House of Austria, and was soon won over completely to the interests of Ferdinand. In all probability, jealousy at the Elector Palatine's elevation to the throne of Bohemia, had a considerable share in this decision; but at the same time it would appear that other means were employed to remove any hesitation from his course. Like many men of dissolute manners, he was greatly under the rule of fanatic preachers, who tolerated his vices upon the condition of governing his policy.

The chief of these interested men was Matthew of Hoenegg, born an Austrian subject, the virulent rival and jealous enemy of Abraham Scultetus, of poor parentage and craving ambition. How he obtained it is not known; but a very large sum of money crowned his labours in some cause, and the Elector of Saxony pronounced in favour of the House of Austria. The Pope furnished considerable pecuniary means; the King of Spain ceased not his warlike preparations; the Elector Palatine was put under ban; and the princes of the Protestant Union acted in behalf of Frederic no farther than to give the Roman Catholic League a fair pretext for declaring war. The armies of the two rival religions were assembled at Donauwerth and Ulm, when France interfered to promote a peace which left Bohemia defenceless. The Protestant princes agreed to confine their operations in support of Frederic to the Palatinate, while the war was to be fought out in Bohemia and Lower Austria; and the unfortunate Frederic found himself suddenly exposed to the attack of the imperial troops and the army of the League, while his new kingdom was disaffected, Moravia and lower Austria overawed, and Lusatia, from which he expected strong reinforcements, invaded by the Elector of Saxony. The Danes remained neuter; Bethlem Gabor was inactive; the Swedes were engaged in war with Poland; James of England gave no assistance, and France had just consummated the ruin of the young monarch's best hopes by the disgraceful treaty of Ulm.

The money, which was necessary to raise and maintain armies, had been squandered in revelry and unreasonable liberality. The affections of the people were estranged by the incapacity and the indiscreet fanaticism of the King and his court. The anger of the great nobility of Bohemia was excited by the sight of foreigners raised to the highest authority in the army and the state. Apprehensions and rumours were busy in the city of Prague. Treason was not inactive. No army sufficient to defend the capital was at hand; and the small force under the command of the gallant Christian of Anhalt, which was intended to impede the enemy's advance, was at a distance from Prague, and totally incapable of contending with the immense body advancing upon Bohemia, under Maximilian of Bavaria, and the Austrian general Bucquoi. With haste and great apprehension, Frederic collected troops from every quarter that could furnish them, as soon as he heard that the armies of the empire and the League had entered lower Austria, and that town after town was submitting to the enemy; while Christian of Anhalt, with less than ten thousand men at his disposition, was retreating before a force of nearly sixty thousand. A consid-

erable body of men was raised sooner than might have been expected, considering the state of the country; but Counts Thurn and Schlick exerted themselves in this emergency in support of their young king, notwithstanding some mortification at seeing the Prince of Hohenloë placed in command above them. Count Mansfeld, however, who was already actively engaged in opposition to Austria, would not submit to that indignity, and he remained with his forces inactive at Pilsen, even while the fate of Bohemia was being decided under the walls of Prague. Messengers were sent off with all speed to Transylvania urging Bethlen Gabor to advance to the support of his ally, and assurances were received that he would hasten with a large force to the aid of Frederic; while that monarch was yet ignorant of the rapid advance of the Austrian and Bavarian troops. At the end of October, however, the despatches of the old Prince of Anhalt roused Frederic to a sense of his really perilous position. He heard now that no towns resisted, however strong were their fortifications; that the severities exercised in all places taken by assault had spread consternation every where, and that instant submission followed the appearance of the Bavarian banners under the walls of the Bohemian cities. Pilsen, indeed, promised to resist; and the works, strengthened by Mansfeld, were likely to set the enemy at defiance. Christian of Anhalt, with his small force, manoeuvred in retreat before the victorious armies; and, by the most skilful movements, secured his own force, and kept the enemy in some degree at bay, affording time to the court of Prague for preparation. One small body of Hungarians, too, were approaching rapidly towards the capital; and some appearance of union and zeal, though it was but a hollow semblance, showed itself amongst the citizens of Prague.

It was under these circumstances, that Frederic, on the 2nd of November, left his capital to see, with his own eyes, the state of his army under the Prince of Anhalt; and, no sooner had he arrived, than the General took advantage of a temporary enthusiasm, created by his presence, to defend the post of Rakonitz against the Austrian forces under Bucquoi. The appearance of the sovereign on the field, and the dauntless courage he displayed in the moment of danger, inspired his forces with fresh ardour, and raised him high in the opinions of the soldiery. Several times it became necessary to beseech him not to expose his person so rashly; but Frederic remained in the hottest fire, notwithstanding all remonstrance, and undoubtedly greatly contributed to give the Imperialists that check which they received at Rakonitz. Christian of Anhalt was well aware that no results of importance could ensue from this skirmish. But Frederic vainly flattered himself that it might afford a favourable opportunity for specific negotiations; and, having sent envoys to treat with the Duke of Bavaria, he returned to his capital, trusting that time, at all events, would be gained, and that, with an offer of peace before him, and Pilsen, with Mansfeld's strong army, on the left, Maximilian at all events would delay to consider his position, if not absolutely retreat.

The Elector treated the proposal with scorn, however. Anhalt was obliged to retreat as soon as the Bavarians could co-operate with the Austrians; and the only advantage obtained by the combat of Rakonitz was the gain of a march or two upon the allied force; so that the Bohemian army arrived under the walls of Prague, and took up its position on the Weissenberg in time to have strengthened itself by entrenchments if the discipline of the soldiery had been equal to the skill and devotion of their commander. A turbulent multitude were already in possession of the Weissenberg, when Christian of Anhalt took up his position there likewise. Provisions were procured with difficulty. No subordination could be maintained. The citizens were murmuring at the unruly manners of the soldiery. Nobody in the town seemed aware that the enemy was so near the gates; and in vain Christian of Anhalt endeavoured to rouse either the monarch's court, the magistrates of the town, or the officers of the army, to a knowledge of their true danger, and the necessity of providing every means of resistance. Such was still the case on the evening of the 19th of November; and here I will conclude this brief sketch of the political events which have necessarily interrupted the general course of my narrative.

It may be asked, what had become of Algernon Grey and Agnes Herbert during all this time. That question can be answered in very few words. Algernon had accompanied the court to Prague—had witnessed all the pageantry of the young monarch's triumphal entrance into his capital—had taken part in the early festivities of the time—and had been thrown by a thousand circumstances into the society of her he loved. Nor had it been possible for him to conceal from Agnes the passion which she had inspired. He had said nothing,—no, not a word,—he had done nothing, as far as he himself could judge, to show her that he loved her: and yet she did not doubt it. It was no longer a question with her,—she saw it, she felt it; and when at last she was obliged to confess to herself that she loved in return, a strange and agitating strife took place in her bosom for some time. But Agnes judged and acted differently from most women; and one bright autumn evening she sat down to consider the character and conduct of Algernon Grey, and to draw deductions from that which she knew regarding that of which she was doubtful. I will only tell the result. "He loves me," she said, "and he knows that I love him. But there is some obstacle, some difficulty—perhaps insurmountable. He is too honourable to trifle with my heart; he has not sought to mislead me. I cannot say that he has even sought to win affection, as some men do, to neglect it afterwards. Oh, no!—he has acted honestly; he has struggled with himself. I can see it all now; but I will trust in his honour still, and while I veil my own feelings as much as may be, will believe that whatever he does is just and noble."

Ere many days were past, Algernon Grey took leave of Agnes Herbert, to accompany the younger Prince Christian into Moravia, and never set his foot in Prague again till, after winning high renown in every skirmish and

combat that took place, he accompanied Christian of Anhalt from Rakonitz in his retreat to the Weissenberg.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was a dark and stormy night, that of the 19th of November, 1620, the eve of the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity; and clouds were rolling heavily over the sky, carried on by a keen and piercing wind which howled and whistled round the old battlements of Prague, and shook the lozenges in the long casements. Not a star was to be seen: the moon afforded not even that pale and uncertain light which she sometimes spreads over the general face of heaven, though her orb itself be hid beneath the vapoury canopy; and the only thing that chequered the darkness of the scene, was a light here and there in the windows of the straggling and irregular city—or a lantern, moving up from the lower to the higher town, caught through a break in the narrow and tortuous streets.

Such was the aspect on the side of Prague; but, upon the Weissenberg, a different scene was displayed: there, crowning the summit, was the camp of the Bohemian army, and, between the tents and waggons, glowed many a watch-fire, to warm such of the soldiery as had no shelter provided for them; and lanterns, hung up before particular pavilions, at some distance from each other, marked the quarters of the leaders of that inharmonious and disjointed force. Thus the whole crest of the hill was in a blaze of light, and a long line of fires ran down from the summit to the wide and beautiful promenade of the Star, marking the ground occupied by the wild Transylvanian horsemen. On the opposite side, towards Pilsen, a dark, black void extended; Christian of Anhalt having strictly prohibited any of the parties to pitch their tents beyond the brow on that side. This order, at least, had been obeyed, though not so with any other he had given; and, indeed, the whole afternoon had passed in wrangling insubordination, which required the utmost exercise of his authority to repress it, and restore order ere nightfall. About six in the evening, indeed, an event had happened which in some degree seconded his exertions. The troops had previously been left nearly without food, and totally without wine; but the strong remonstrances of the General to the court of Prague, and the liberal use of his own purse amongst the sutlers of the town, had at length procured a liberal supply of meat and bread, and a moderate quantity of wine. The distribution was immediately made, and, while the soldiery were engaged in eating and drinking, measures were taken by their officers for restoring discipline; so that, by nine of the clock, a greater degree of order was to be seen in the camp, and this night promised to pass over quietly.

It was about that hour that Algernon Grey gazed forth from his tent for a moment over the impressive scene always afforded by the night encampment of an army. As he looked out, his eye ran over the several groups—rested upon the watch-fires—sped on, again, towards the

Hungarian quarters, and then turned to the tents behind, and rolled over the different lines, with a watchful and marking expression. From time to time he turned his head, and spoke a few words to some one within the tent, in broken and disjointed sentences—something after the following form:—

"There must be twenty thousand, I think; that is to say without counting the Hungarians. How many do they count?"

"Twelve thousand," said a deep voice from within.

"Not so many, I should imagine," continued Algernon Grey. "Let me see—reckon ten men to a fire—there cannot be more than eight thousand, at the most. With such an army, one could do much, if there were but some bond between them, and we had something like discipline; and yet, and yet, I very much doubt the result."

"Where's your cousin? where's Lovet?" asked the voice again.

"He is gone into the town," answered Algernon Grey, turning back into the tent, and seating himself at a small rude table, by the side of the young Prince of Anhalt. "To tell the truth," he continued, "I am not sorry to be free from his presence: Lovet's spirit is too light to accord with mine in such moments as these. I must and do feel these things deeply, Christian. I cannot forget the scene that we witnessed here just twelve months ago, nor avoid comparing them with that which Prague presents even now; menaced by a superior army, with no proper preparations for defence, with your father's vast military skill fruitless to remedy faults of others, and the daring courage of yourself, and many like you, all cast away in the service of a prince unequal to the task he has assumed, and, I must add, little worthy of the crown which has been bestowed upon him."

"There has been a sad change, indeed," said the young Prince of Anhalt, in a gloomy tone; "and Frederic, I must own, has not shown himself worthy of the crown he wears; but still he has not many serious faults, and there is one, at least, worthy of every chivalrous exertion which noble-hearted man can make. I speak of your own fair Princess: faultless as beautiful, and brave as good. Would to God that she were our king! but yet we must all confess that Frederic has had a difficult game to play."

"True," answered Algernon Grey; "and he has played it badly. There never was, perhaps, a more united nation than these Bohemians when they raised the Elector Palatine to their throne. I mean, united heart and hand in that great act. Frederic owed his elevation not to a party in the State: the whole country was his party. You recollect the enthusiasm that awaited him wherever he appeared; in the castle of the noble, in the streets of the city, amongst the cottages of the village. There was not a man to be found unwillingly and unprepared to draw the sword in his cause. But now, in one short year, how changed has everything become: the bond of union is broken; the united people is scattered into a thousand parties; and to what are we to attribute this? to his own weakness, I fear, and his own mistakes. It is a curious thing to

consider how the destruction of great parties is effected, and I fear that it is a question on which Frederic never meditated, though it was that on which depended the stability of his power. The man who yields to the mere prejudices of the body which raised him to high station, will not maintain it long, it is true; but the man who resists the legitimate claims of that body is sure to fall very soon, for the disappointment of reasonable hopes is the seed of animosity, producing a bitter harvest. If it be dangerous to disappoint friends in their just demands, it is ten times more dangerous to encourage enemies, by endeavouring to conciliate them by any sacrifice of principle. Now Frederic has more or less incurred all these perils; in many respects he has yielded to the prejudices of the Bohemian people, and yet disappointed the reasonable hopes of many; he has given encouragement to enemies, by weak efforts to pacify and conciliate them; in short, he has forgotten the maxim or the motto of an old leader in this very land, 'A friend to my friends, an enemy to my enemies, a lover of peace, but no fearer of war.'"

"Ay, there has been his mistake, indeed. His should have been the aggressive policy, as soon as a single sword was drawn against him; it was no time for temporizing when he had taken a crown from an emperor's head, and an emperor armed to recover it. At the head of the whole Bohemian people, who would then have followed him like a pack of wolves, he should have marched straight to the gates of Vienna, and dictated the terms of peace in the halls of the Imperial Palace to him who has grown strong by impunity, and whose only rights are in tyranny. Then, when Ferdinand of Gratz was quelled, should have come the turn of Maximilian of Bavaria; and, ere the treaty of Ulm had time to get dry, the Catholic League might have been annihilated. The greatest mistake that men make is when they do not discover whether it be the time for energy or repose. But yet, I see not how it is that he has disappointed the reasonable hopes and claims of the Bohemian people."

Algernon Grey smiled as the young Prince raised his eyes for a reply.

"We are friends, Christian," he said; "now old and tried friends, or I would not venture to say to you what I am about to utter. The Bohemians had a right to expect that the highest posts in the State and army should be bestowed upon themselves instead of upon foreigners; but the reverse has been the case here. In the army what do you see?"

"Why, in Heaven's name!" cried Christian of Anhalt, "that there is not one man amongst them so well qualified to lead a host as my father."

"Undoubtedly no," answered Algernon Grey; "but still the Bohemians have a right to complain that one of their own nobles was not selected for the task. Thurn and Schlick are both old and tried soldiers, with a high renown amongst their countrymen, and although as inferior to your father in every quality of a general as the meanest soldier is to them, yet, depend upon it, they themselves, and the whole Bohemian people have felt it a slight not alone to the two counts, but to the whole of Bohemia."

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"Very true," said a voice at the entrance of the tent; "quite just and right, my young friend!" and an elderly man, of strong and powerful frame, with a grey peaked beard, and a broad-brimmed hat upon his head, entered and grasped Algernon Grey familiarly by the shoulder. "The placing me over these men has been one of the King's greatest faults. Heaven knows, I did not seek it; had he given me but a corps of ten thousand men raised in the Palatinato, I could have done him better service than leading the whole rabble of Bohemia. But I have come to seek you upon other matters—faults that can be mended, which this cannot."

"I hope none on my part, my noble Prince?"

"No, no," said the old soldier; "you do your duty well, and I shall beg you this night to let me have ten of your stout fellows to throw out a little way upon the high road. There is no knowing how soon the Bavarian may be upon us; he will let no grass grow beneath his horse's hoofs, for he knows as well as I do that if he do not fight a battle very soon, and win a victory, his men must starve. Could we but have stopped him at Pilsen, the game would have been in our hands; but it could not be done without Mansfeld, and Mansfeld was jealous and would not act—but three days, but three days—it is all I could desire." And the old general leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought.

"He cannot be here till Monday," said Algernon Grey; "we gained two marches on him."

"To-morrow's sun will not set," answered the Prince, "without seeing him under this hill, and if I could but get the men to work, we might yet set him at defiance, and let his host famish at our feet till they vanished away like the spring snow. But these people will do nothing; all this afternoon has been wasted, so will to-morrow; not a redoubt will be ready, nor a line. However, we must not blame them so much; they are disheartened; they hear of nothing but disaster; they have little food themselves, and want their Prince's presence amongst them. Here he is scarcely ever with the army; his time is passed in revelry, devotion, pleasure, and preaching, turn by turn: now listening to the ravings of Scultetus, or looking into the eyes of Emilia of Solms, or tripping it in the dance, or listening to the drivelling of a jester. We must have him amongst us, my young friend, this very night, if it be possible; if not, very early to-morrow. I say not we shall lose the battle—God forbid!—but I say the only way to make them even stand to their colours is to give them their Prince's presence. Things look dark enough, and we must lose no chance. Frederic is fighting for a crown, and he must not mind the labours of a bloody day."

"He does not want courage, assuredly," replied Algernon Grey; "and I doubt not he will be here in the hour of danger."

"Nor I," answered the old Prince; "but for any moral effect he must be here before. He must show the men that he will live or die with them: then there is no fear; for, if he once shows energy, the disaffected in yon town will fear to show their heads; and should we be driven from our position on this hill, the guns from Prague will still protect us, or the walls

of Prague shelter us. But, now, to what brings me hither. I have thought to-night that we must move the Queen to send her husband hither, and I have considered how this can best be done. The task must fall upon you, my young friend; you are her countryman, of high rank and station in your own land, have highly distinguished yourself in her husband's service, and for twelve months have exposed your person and employed your means in upholding his throne, without any reward but honour. You must go to her—must see her—must urge upon her the necessity of the case. He is now reveling, and will be so employed till twelve; get on your horse then at once, and see what can be done."

"But, indeed, General," said Algernon Grey, "I must have some authority for this; otherwise, in the first place, I may not obtain admission to the Queen, and if I do she may look upon my interference as gross impertinence."

"Authority!" said the bluff old Prince, "here it is. I knew what you would say, and therefore wrote these few words, namely, 'Your Majesty will credit all that is said to you by Algernon Grey, on the part of your devoted servant, Christian of Anhalt.' The rest I must leave to your eloquence; and now, if you would save the army, away with all speed and use your best endeavours."

Algernon Grey cast down his eyes and meditated for several moments. "It is a delicate task," he said at length, "a very delicate task, General; first, to speak to a wife on the conduct of her husband; next, to speak to a subject on the conduct of her King; for, though she is Queen, still she is his subject; and, more than all, to talk to one so placed as she is, of the faults of him whom she is bound to honour, and does love. My noble Prince, I would fain not undertake it. If there be any one in all your camp whom you can trust with this same sad and perilous errand, I do beseech you put it not upon me."

The old Prince of Anhalt took him by both hands and grasped them hard: "Your very sense," he said, "of the difficulty and importance of the bitter task is proof enough that there is no one so fitted for it as yourself. I do beseech you, my friend, to undertake it. If you would save this realm; if you would preserve the crown for the Elector Frederic; if you would save from ruin that sweet lady whom we all love and serve; if you would avert evils innumerable, massacre, torture, persecution, the overthrow of the pure faith in this kingdom, go about the task at once; make one last effort for our only hope of victory; and then, let the result be what it may, lay down your head in peace, knowing that you, at least, have done your best."

Algernon Grey wrung his hand hard. "I will go, noble old man," he said, "I will go; though it cost me one of the bitterest pangs that my heart has ever felt; though it may be the cause of much after-sorrow, I will go. It shall not be said that anything was wanting on my side, to support the part I have espoused."

"Thanks, thanks!" cried the old Prince of Anhalt. "Ho, without there! Bring up Master Algernon Grey's horse, quick! My lord," he continued, "God knows whether any of us

here will see the end of to-morrow. Ere you return I shall have lain down to take one sort of sleep, which, ere the next day's sunset, may be changed for another kind. If we never meet again, remember I die grateful to you for this act and many others. A better soldier never lived than you have shown yourself under me; and old Christian of Anhalt, having seen some fields in his days, may be as good a judge of such scenes as many men. But, above all, I thank you for that which you are now going to do. I know how bitter it is, and that you would rather meet a hundred enemies with lance in hand, than this fair lady, on such an errand as that which you go upon. But it is for the advancement of the cause—for its salvation, I might say; and I know that is enough for you. Do not bring me any message back. I should be sorry to be refused with courtly words; and if he comes that will be sufficient."

"What is the pass-word at the gates, my lord?" asked Algernon Grey, as he heard a horse trotting up.

"The crown," answered the old General. "Now, away, away! What do you keep him for, boy?"

"Tell the Queen," said young Christian of Anhalt, who had caught his friend by the arm, "that if there be a battle to-morrow, I will carry her glove into the midst of the enemy's host, and bring her back news of victory or not return at all."

"She will believe you, Christian," replied Algernon Grey. "Farewell for the present: I shall see you again;" and, turning away, he quitted the tent and mounted his horse.

"I and Prill will run beside you, noble sir," said the young gentleman's servant, Tony, as he held the stirrup; "I would not have any more horses out, for the poor beasts are tired, and I have a shrewd notion that they may be wanted to-morrow. Whither do you speed, sir?"

"To the town and to the palace," answered his master, briefly; and, riding on with the old servant on one side of his horse, and the page on the other, he reached the gates of Prague in about a quarter of an hour.

Dull and gloomy was the scene under the archway, where, with naught but a wicket open, some half-dozen men armed with corslet, sallet, and partisan, kept guard by a large fire, which threw a lurid glare over the heavy masses of stonework. The towers of the gate rose high on either side; the dark arch frowned above; and through the aperture beyond appeared naught but a faint glimpse of a small irregular place d'arms, and a long, black-looking street leading into the town.

"Who comes here?" cried a soldier, as Algernon Grey approached; and at the same time a partisan was dropped to his horse's pommel.

"A friend," replied the young gentleman—"the crown!"

"Welcome, friend! pass the crown," answered the soldier; and the gates were instantly thrown open to give him admission.

Taking his way slowly along the dim streets, Algernon Grey mounted towards the palace, and at length reached the open space before the vast old building called the Hradschin, where the court of Bohemia was then lodged. In

many of the windows there was a light; but from one long line of casements a broad glare poured forth upon the night, and he could not but feel some bitterness of spirit as he thought that there Frederic was holding a senseless revel, when his friends and his soldiers were encamped without, waiting in privation and hardship the attack of a superior enemy. Giving his horse to the servant, with orders to wait there till he returned, and his sword to the page, with directions to follow him, the young cavalier approached the gates of the palace, entered the first court, and mounted the steps on the left. Some guards before the gates demanded the pass-word; and the attendants within made many difficulties when they heard that he sought an audience of the Queen. One of them said at length, however, shrugging his shoulders and turning away, that the Queen was ill in bed. Algernon Grey, without losing temper, demanded to see any of her ladies. "The Princess Amelia of Solms," he said, "the Countess of Löwenstein, or any of them."

"I will go and see," answered the man, who, it seemed, did not know the visitor; and the young Englishman was detained in the entrance-hall fully ten minutes before he received any reply to his application. During that time a number of richly dressed servants passed and repassed, carrying large silver dishes, gilt flagons of wine, and plates of sweetmeats; but at length the attendant to whom he had spoken returned, and, in a much more deferential tone, requested him to follow. Leaving the page below, he accompanied his guide up one of the many staircases of the building, through a long corridor, down two or three steps, along another narrow passage, and then through a large sort of vestibule supported by heavy stone pillars. At the farther side of this hall the servant threw open a door, desiring Algernon Grey to enter, and saying, "One of the ladies will come to you in a moment, sir."

Algernon Grey gazed around. The aspect of the chamber was certainly not fitted to raise any very cheerful thoughts. There were splendid draperies and hangings, it is true, but of dull and cheerless colours; and the rest of the furniture, though richly gilt, was rude in its forms, and antique in its fashion. One solitary sconce was lighted, projecting through the arras from a long limb of gilded iron; and as he marked the faint light striving to penetrate the gloom, and with the rays losing themselves in the deep hues of the drapery, he thought, "Thus shine the hopes of Bohemia."

The moment after, he heard a door creak on the right hand side of the room, and, turning round, saw the tapestry quickly pushed back.

CHAPTER XXV.

"AGNES!" exclaimed Algernon Grey, advancing to meet her, whom he had not seen for so many months; "this is, indeed, a pleasure."

The colour varied in the fair girl's cheek, spreading wide and fading away again, like the light of a summer sunset; but, without reserve or coolness, she came forward towards him, holding out her hand with a glad smile:—"How

long it is since we met!" she cried; "and now we meet at a strange moment."

"A strange moment, indeed, and a terrible one, I fear; for we are on the eve of a great battle, Agnes. The result is with God alone; but yet, as far as human foresight can calculate upon things always most uncertain, there is much reason to fear that the event will not be a happy one."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Agnes, gazing at him with a sad, but deeply interested look; "it is terrible enough to think of so many of our fellow-creatures meeting to shed their blood, without having, too, to anticipate the disaster of defeat. But they told me there were five-and-thirty thousand men, protected by the guns of Prague—a powerful artillery—a great and skilful general."

"The numbers I cannot justly estimate," replied Algernon Grey; "the guns of Prague can be of no service, Agnes, except as protection in case of defeat. The general, it is true, is most skilful; but his soldiers are insubordinate; his army full of incoherent parts; his officers divided in counsel, and each thinking he can judge better than his commander; the troops themselves depressed in spirits by want and fatigue, and a long, harassing retreat; the small force that has fought the enemy having no confidence in, and no bond of union with, the new levies, which seem to me but heterogeneous masses, different in discipline and in character, and very often not understanding each other's language. It is all this that makes me dread the result. But I am sent to the Queen, dear Agnes, to urge her strongly upon some points of great interest to the welfare of her husband and herself. Good old Prince Christian of Anhalt chose me for this task, as her countryman; and, though it is a painful one to perform, yet it must be done."

"She knows there is some one here from the Prince of Anhalt," replied Agnes Herbert; "but she is ill, and in bed. She sent me down to say that she could see no one, were it not on business of life and death; and I came, not knowing who it was I should find."

"This is business of life and death, sweet friend," replied Algernon Grey; "and, if it be possible, I must see her. The King, I fear, is revelling; and, besides, the appeal must now be made to the Queen herself."

"He has a great banquet to-night," replied Agnes Herbert, with the colour somewhat mounting in her cheek. "I do not think he believes the peril so imminent."

"He is wrong," answered Algernon Grey; "for he has had warning enough;—but speed back to the Queen, dear lady; tell her that I come on matters of deep moment; show her this letter from the Prince, and, if possible, obtain me an audience. At all events, return to me for a moment yourself, Agnes, for there is a word or two that I would fain speak before an event occurs that may change the whole face of every one's destiny in the army and in the court."

"Oh, yes! I will return," replied Agnes Herbert, with a quivering lip and drooping eyelids; "but I will go now and do my best to gain what you desire."

He took her hand and kissed it; then he

her go; and, in a moment, he was once more alone. She was not long absent, however; for in two or three minutes the tapestry again moved back, and Agnes re-appeared, with a glad smile, saying, "The Queen will rise and see you. As soon as she is up she will send some one to tell us."

"Then let me not lose the present moment," said Algernon Grey. "In some things, my conduct must have seemed strange to you, Agnes,—I am sure it has."

Agnes looked down, with a pale cheek, and made no reply.

"There are secrets in most men's history," continued Algernon Grey; "and there are some sad ones in mine, sweet friend. Events have taken place which shackle my spirit and heart more heavily than fetters of iron could my limbs. There is not time, at present, to tell you the whole tale; but, if I live beyond this next battle, all shall be explained."

"Indeed, I seek no explanation," said Agnes Herbert, laying her hand gently on his arm; "I have seen much of you; I know you, I think, Algernon, to the heart. My trust in your honour and your honesty is unbounded; and nothing shall ever make me believe that you are in the wrong, though you may be unfortunate. I am contented with this conviction, and ask no more."

"Nevertheless," answered Algernon Grey, pressing his lips again and again upon her hand, "if I live, I will tell you all, whatever be the result. But there is one thing you must promise me, dear Agnes, if you have in me that confidence you say."

"I have, I have," she answered eagerly; "and I will do anything that is right to prove it to you. Only say what it is you would have."

Her lover held her by the hand, and gazed into her eyes with a look of deep and tender interest, inournfully, yet not without happiness; for there is a bright consolation in mutual trust, which lights up the darkest hour of life with a gleam like the sunshine on a cloud. "What I would have you to do, is this, dear Agnes," he said: "the event of the battle is, of course, doubtful, and the consequences may be such as I dread to think of. The army, or a part of it, may be driven to retreat into Prague, there to be besieged by a superior force. What will follow then it is difficult to foresee. The town, at all events, will be in a state of turbulence and misrule. It may have to capitulate; it may even be taken by assault; but you must promise that, if I survive the battle, which I somehow have a presentiment will be the case, you will trust in me entirely, as if I were a brother; you will follow my counsels, be ready to answer to my call at any moment, when I judge your escape practicable. I ask you to trust in me fully, totally, and entirely; and, on my word of honour as a man, a gentleman, and a Christian, I assure you, you may do so without any doubt or hesitation, whatever be the circumstances into which your compliance may throw us towards each other. In the hour of peril and of difficulty, Agnes—my duty done as a soldier—my only thought will be of you."

"I will, Algernon, I will," answered Agnes Herbert. "Under such circumstances our poor

Princess will have enough to think of and to do, without caring for me; and I will not only trust to you, but will show you how I trust, by seeking your counsel, your aid, or your protection, whenever I find it needful. But yet do not suppose that I shall give way weakly to fear. What you say certainly alarms me. I know that such views of imminent peril are not entertained here; and this is the first time that I have heard it clearly stated that danger is at the doors. It takes me, therefore, by surprise; but yet it does not terrify me as much as might be expected. I have a confidence that can not be shaken; a rock of trust, whose foundations are sure; and, although I speak not about such things as much as many in this court, yet my reliance on the mercy and goodness of God keeps me calm even now, and will, I trust, do so should the evils fall on me that we anticipate. I am not so light and thoughtless as people have believed—perhaps, as I have believed myself; for I feel my courage rise against what sometime ago I should have thought would overwhelm me, I can endure, if I cannot resist; and I feel full confidence that help will come when it is needed; that resolution will not fail; and that, if I have to depend upon you for support and guidance, no vain terrors, on my part, will shackle your energies; no weak hesitation or delay impede your actions, or frustrate your views."

"Noble—noble girl," cried Algernon Grey, pressing her hand in his: "methinks, with you on my side, I could dare and defy a world."

As he spoke, the same door by which Agnes had entered opened again, and a woman appeared, in the dress of a superior servant. She addressed herself to Agnes at once, saying, "Her Majesty sent me, Madam, to tell you that she is ready now to receive the gentleman you mentioned."

"Come, then," said Agnes, turning to Algernon Grey, "I will show you the way;" and, leading him through the same door, she passed a little antechamber, and then mounted a flight of ten narrow steps, which conducted to a small room with a door half open, entering into a larger one. All was perfectly still, but a bright light came from the inner chamber; and, making Algernon Grey a sign to stay there for a moment, Agnes advanced and went in. The next instant she appeared at the door again, beckoning him to come forward, and three steps brought him into a large room, containing a bed beneath a canopy of crimson and gold, and various other articles of rich furniture, on which the arms of Bohemia were frequently emblazoned. A large fire was burning on the wide hearth, and a single lamp on a table shed a faint light through the chamber, showing a large velvet chair before the chimney, with the form of Elizabeth of Bohemia seated therein, wrapped in a loose dressing-gown of satin trimmed with fur.

Algernon Grey advanced to the side of the young Queen, behind whose seat two German women were standing; and, bowing the head reverently, took the hand she extended towards him, and bent his head over it.

A few moments passed in the ceremonious courtesies of the day, Elizabeth asking news of his health, and how he had fared in the camp,

and the young Englishman answering, with many professions of devotion to her cause and person. But then began the more difficult, but more important portion of their conversation, the Queen breaking off at length somewhat abruptly, as if impatient curiosity mastered her, and inquiring, "Well, what message has our good cousin, Prince Christian of Anhalt, sent us, my lord?—something of importance, doubtless, or he would have chosen another hour and a less distinguished messenger!"

"It is for your Majesty's private ear," answered Algernon Grey; "and we have here many to listen."

"None but our sweet Agnes understands our English tongue, my lord," replied the Queen; "and I have no secrets from her, nor, perhaps, have you either."

"This is none of mine, your Majesty," he said; "but still I doubt not she may well be a partaker thereof, if you are certain that these two other ladies are not likely to gather the substance."

"Not a word of it," cried the Queen; "speak, speak freely."

Algernon would have felt great relief if the royal lady had but uttered one word which could lead naturally to the painful subject he had to discuss. Elizabeth, however, whose high courage with difficulty grasped the idea of danger, even when it was presented to her, was not one to foresee it when it was all remote and uncertain; and, as she said naught which could fairly open the subject, he was obliged to plunge into it at once abruptly. "Your Majesty has read the letter of the Prince of Anhalt," he said (Elizabeth nodded her head). "From that you must be satisfied that nothing but the most immediate necessity," continued the young Englishman; "nothing but the most imminent danger, I might say, would have induced him to send me hither at such a time. But, madam, the peril is imminent, the necessity is great; and though with deep pain I undertook the task, yet I would not refuse anything that might be serviceable to your Majesty."

When first he began to speak, Elizabeth had remained with her head somewhat bent, and her eyes fixed upon the fire; but, as he uttered the last words, she turned quickly round, and gazed at him with a flushed cheek and quivering lip. "What is this that you tell me, my lord?" she cried, in a tone of great surprise, "I must have been kept in ignorance—and yet I cannot believe that there is such danger as your words imply, or that it is near. By looking far forward for perils, we often make them, and always needlessly disturb and agitate ourselves. The mariner who gazes at every distant wave, and strives to avoid it, thinking it will overwhelm him, will hold the helm with no steady hand, and, very likely, run his boat upon a rock, to avoid that evil which God's good will and a thousand accidents may carry wide away and never bring it near."

"Let me represent to your Majesty, firmly, though humbly," said Algernon Grey, "that this peril is not distant; this wave, this dark and terrible wave, is already rearing its crest over the prow of your royal bark. It is near at hand, and the only thing for those who love and serve you is to consider how it may be met

or avoided. The enemy are marching rapidly on Prague, and immediate battle must ensue, and—"

"Have we not troops?" exclaimed Elizabeth; "is there not a royal army encamped on yon hill!—are there no walls, no cannon, around Prague?" And then, suddenly bending down her head, she pressed her hand upon her eyes for an instant, but continued, before Algernon Grey could answer, "What is it you would say, my lord? I do believe you love me; I know that there is not a bolder heart in Europe. Something must have gone strangely amiss to bring you here with such auguries of mischance. Surely the enemy is not near! When last I heard he was at six days' march. Or could the troops be unfaithful! Brave they have always shown themselves. Can the pestilential treasons that have been hatching in this town have spread beyond the gates to them?"

"No, madam, I trust not," answered Algernon Grey; "but you are deceived as to the enemy's distance. By the most skilful strategy the Prince of Anhalt has gained one march, or, at most, two, upon the enemy; the last tidings, however, show the Austrians and Bavarians in full march for Prague; to-morrow will certainly see them beneath its walls. A battle cannot be delayed beyond one day more—perhaps not so long. Now, let us see what we have to count upon in this battle. Under Buguois and Maximilian of Bavaria march fifty thousand men, all veteran, subordinate, well-disciplined soldiers; without counting the force detached under Wallenstein and others to keep Pilsen in check. Forty heavy pieces of artillery accompany this force, and the cavalry is strong and numerous. Under the walls of Prague now lie for its defence some five-and-thirty thousand men, at the utmost computation, with ten small guns. This in itself is a sad disparity; but yet, under ordinary circumstances, it would by no means render the case a hopeless one. A handful of men has often defeated a host, but then that spirit must be with them which is better than all the ordnance that ever poured death upon the foe. Is that spirit amongst your Majesty's troops?"

He paused for a moment, for Elizabeth made a motion with her hand, as if begging him to cease and let her think; but, after a brief space, she said, in a low voice, "Go on, go on! I must hear all—spare nothing, my lord; say every word!"

"It grieves me, madam, but it is my duty to your Majesty," answered Algernon Grey. "The disparity, then, between the numbers of the two armies is rendered greater by the moral state of each. Your troops are faithful, I do believe; but see what a difference exists between them and the enemy: the latter are coming up with the force and energy of attack, and the prestige of victory; yours have, in great part, been waiting long, hearing of defeat, troubled with rumours of towns taken and their fellows butchered; receiving retreating troops amongst them, learning to look with apprehension for attack, rather than to rush with ardour to assail. Thus their courage has been lowered, their enthusiasm drowned, their resolution shaken."

"But how could this have been avoided?"

exclaimed the Queen "You seem to blame the measures that have been taken."

"I would reply, madam, that it is with the future, not the past, we have to do," answered Algernon Grey; "but that from the past we may judge what is necessary for the present moment. I will, then, blame the measures that have been taken; for they have been suggested to his Majesty by civilians as ignorant of what is needful for the defence of a kingdom as any priest in a country parish. The defensive policy which has been assumed was not the policy for Bohemia. That policy was to attack as soon as the Emperor began the war—to prevent the concentration of his forces—to cut through his alliances—to gain friends and daunt adversaries by winning the first successes of the strife. The true policy of Bohemia was to attack as soon as the Emperor began the war. That time has passed by: yet much may be retrieved if we can but win this battle; and the first means of so doing is to restore some moral tone to the soldiery. The army is faithful; but there is a great difference between being faithful and being zealous. The troops are not zealous. Time—delay—reverses—neglect—fatigue—privation—have all cooled them. His Majesty's own continued absence from the army has cooled them also. Forgive me, Madam, if I have seemed to speak irreverently, and even unfeelingly; but I will show you a reason for it presently. These men, fighting continually against superior forces, driven from camp to camp, and only making a stand where the ground greatly favoured them, subjected to all sorts of privations, and wearied to death with marches, have heard of feasting and pageantry at Prague, but no preparations for their support; have heard of preaching and long prayers, but not of levies and trainings, and forces in the field to aid them. They have seen the enemy every day—their King only once."

"Oh, cease! cease!" cried Elizabeth, clasping her hands together. "I have seen it; I have felt it. I have known right well that this is not the way to win or keep a crown. It is sad; it is—But, no, no; I must not speak such things; I must not even think them. He is my husband—good, noble, brave; but too lightly, too easily persuaded. I have been ill, too, myself—am little fitted for active exertion even now; but yet, tell me what you desire—tell me what Christian of Anhalt judges needful for the security of the present moment."

"The immediate presence of the King in the camp," answered Algernon Grey. "Let him show himself to the soldiery—let him take part in their labours and their dangers—let him command, lead, encourage, as he did at Rakonitz. Their enthusiasm in his cause will revive; their courage and their zeal will mount together. With that hill for our position, and these cannon for our support, we will win the victory, or die to the last man."

Elizabeth started up, and grasped his hand in hers. "He shall come," she said: "if I am a king's daughter and a king's wife, he shall come. Early in the morning he shall be with his troops, if my voice have not lost all power over him. And now go, my friend. Agnes, you lead him down. Yet, stay one moment. There is never knowing what may happen in this life of change.

Should the terrible disasters which our worst fears paint befall us, all will be confusion here. My lord, I tremble for some of these poor things who have accompanied me to Prague. Let me provide defence for one of them. You will take care of my poor Agnes!—is it not so? You are her father's friend. You love her well, I know. You will protect her in the hour of need!"

"If I survive, I will protect her as a brother," answered Algernon Grey, "till I give up the charge to her good uncle at Heidelberg."

"Enough, enough," said the Queen. "Now go. You have spoken hardly, my lord, but kindly, I do believe; and I thank you from my heart for opening eyes that have been closed too long. Lead him down, my Agnes."

Algernon Grey bowed low, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THERE were a few murmured words at the door of that large room where Algernon Grey had waited to know the pleasure of the Queen of Bohemia; there was a soft pressure of the hand; and then, by an irresistible impulse, which mastered forethought, reason, and resolution, he drew the sweet girl, who stood beside him, gently towards him, and pressed his lips upon hers. No human form was seen in the corridor; it was dim, nearly dark, lighted by one faint lamp; but yet, though none saw, his heart smote him; and he said, "Forgive me, Agnes, forgive me, dear one! such a moment, such events, may well excuse one token of eternal tenderness towards you who are so dear."

"I do forgive you, Algernon," said Agnes, very pale; "but oh, do not, do not."

"I will ask your forgiveness hereafter," answered Algernon; "when my whole heart shall be laid before you. Then, I think, you will forgive me, when you see the terrible struggle which has agitated me so long."

"Yes—I am sure I shall find nothing to forgive," she replied; "but yet you must not do this again; for, if you do, I shall doubt—I shall fear."

"Fear not," answered Algernon Grey, raising her hand to his lips; "on my honor, on my truth, I will give you no cause to doubt or fear—No, no, Agnes, you cannot doubt me."

"Nor do I, nor do I," she said, laying her other hand upon his; "oh no, I am sure you are all that is noble and good. Farewell, farewell!—we part in a terrible moment. Do not expose yourself rashly; but come back with victory if it be possible, and if not, still come back to protect poor Agnes Herbert in the moment of danger and need."

He did not answer; but again and again he kissed her hand; and, then turning away, he strode along the wide corridor towards the head of the great stairs.

He thought he heard a low laugh from the farther end of the passage, but his mind was in no state to attend to trifles; and, descending rapidly, he found himself the next moment in the wide vestibule below. All the servants and attendants were absent. The two large chairs, in which the chief porters sat, were

vacant; the broad table, at which the pages and daily waiters played at different games, displayed not a single figure learning the shortest road to vice and folly. Algernon Grey was walking quickly across, when he heard, proceeding from a door at the side, a well-known voice pronounce his name.

"What, Algernon!" cried William Lovet; and the young Englishman, as he turned round, could see the foot of a narrow staircase faintly marked beyond the doorway where Lovet stood; "what, Algernon, you here! You, a man of feuds and battle-fields, contemner of love and all self-delights—you within the silky precincts of a court, where the star of beauty reigns supreme; and Eros holds one side of the house, while Bacchus holds the other! Wonders will never cease! I shall expect to see old Christian of Anhalt tripping it gaily with Amelia of Lolma in some gay ball, or the Prince of Hohenloe twirling round upon his toes, with heels unsprung, and a soft simper on his bellicose lip. In fortune's name! what has brought you hither?"

"Business, my good cousin," answered Algernon Grey; "and that business none of mine. The secret is another's; therefore it must rest where it is—in my own bosom."

"Good," answered Lovet, "exceeding good. I would not add an ounce weight to my campaigner for all the secrets that ever yet were kitted. I am neither a great general nor a great diplomatist, thank heaven and the stars that are therein. I can fight and make love, play a shrewd game at cards with a knavish adversary, rattle the dice-box hard and yet throw sixes; but I know naught of the trade of negotiation, thanks be unto God! Your taciturn virtue, with the hat over the left ear, the moustachio turned up at the corner, and the feather half hiding the right eye, tawny leather boots, a sober doublet, and a sword long enough for Don Pedro of Spain, give you all the qualities requisite for a profound ambassador; and the gods forbid, that I should meddle with the puddle, or stir the duck-wood of your stagnant diplomacy. But whither away! You seem in haste, when every man this night is idling out his moments, what with cups of wine, what with huge sirloins, what with bright eyes and sweet smiles, thinking that that same perishable commodity called time may be but scanty in the purse of the future; and that it is but wise to get the money's worth, ere it is all expended."

"I am back to the camp with all speed," answered Algernon Grey. "Matters are not going there as I could wish; and, moreover, it is late."

"Not too late to take a walk round the ramparts," said Lovet, in a graver tone than he had used. "It is well worth our while, my noble cousin, to look at what is going on there."

"It will occupy much time," answered his companion, somewhat struck by the change in his manner; "and, in the present state of affairs, we shall be challenged and stopped by every sentry that we meet with."

"Fear not," answered Lovet, with a slight smile; "I am profoundly intimate with every guard you will meet upon the walls; and I re-

peat, good cousin, that it is well worth while, for you, at least, who can report to your friend, the general, to see with a soldier's eye the preparations of the what they call the klein sette of the city of Prague; for, as we shall have a battle-to-morrow or the next day, and as Christian of Anhalt, in case of reverse, may think fit to retreat into the town, it is quite right he should know what the city is like. It is a marvellous place, Prague, and mighty tranquil. But come, tell your horses to go to the gate, mine are there already."

While he had been speaking, his cousin and himself had descended a second flight of steps, and entered the hall close to the great door of the first court. All was still emptiness; and the two gentlemen were left to open the wicket for themselves, without any one to assist them.

"'Tis a pity," said William Lovet, "that Maximilian of Bavaria does not know what is going on here; otherwise he might end the war at once, and might take the Elector himself in the midst of his banquet, like a fat carp in a stew feeding upon groundbait."

There was too much truth, as Algernon Grey felt, in what his cousin said; and, not at all unwilling to obtain some indication of the state of the popular mind in Prague, the young Englishman, when they issued out into the open air, called his servant Tony to his side, and told him to lead his horse down the hill to the gate by which he had entered, and to wait for his coming there.

"Take care where you go, my lord," said the man; "for the people are all as drunk as swine, and mighty quarrelsome to boot. Here is Frill, who has got into three disputes since you went in, and one regular quarrel, in which he would have got his costard broken had I not interfered and spoken them fair in a language of which they did not understand a word; so that the poor people were convinced, and had nothing to reply. I showed them how tall he was with my hand, and how tall they were, and I patted my stomach and strugged my shoulders, and clapped one gentleman on the back till his leathern jerkin fumed like a dusty road; and, seeing that I was not a German, who are the bullies here in Bohemia, they walked away and left Frill in a whole skin, and me very glad to be quit of their company. So I beseech you, my good lord, to be careful where you go."

"I will take care," answered Algernon Grey, briefly. "Go down, as I have told you;" and taking Lovet's arm he proceeded through two or three narrow streets, till they came to a low stony lane, which ran at the foot of the inner wall. After pacing on for about a hundred yards, they found a flight of rude stone steps leading up to the platform above, without railing or balustrade; and mounting, they walked on looking over the parapet upon the low ground underneath. From time to time they came upon a heavy piece of ordnance, but no soldier appeared beside it; they passed several flanking towers, but no sentry was seen on guard; they gazed forth upon the outworks of the place, but from the Hradschin to the Moldau neither fire, nor light, nor moving form showed any sign of preparation against attack.

"Now, let men say what they will," said

Lovet, in his usual keen sarcastic tone, "this city of Prague is a strong and well-defended place; and so watched and guarded as it is, so harmonious and faithful within, and with a united and an enthusiastic army without, keen must be the courage, and overpowering the force, that will subdue it to an enemy. You can do what you like, Algernon, but if you would take my advice, you would do either one of two things; go to old Christian of Anhalt, tell him that Prague is in the most perfect state of defence, well provisioned, well watched, and well garrisoned, and, that in case of defeat, he may retreat into it in all security; or else, bring your men and horses to the gate, walk back to the palace, tell fair Agnes Herbert that you have come to conduct her in safety to Heidelberg, mount and away. You understand what I mean; as for myself, my course is taken."

Algernon Grey grasped him by the arm, and gazed in his face by the light of the moon. "You do not mean to say," he exclaimed, "that such is the course you intend to pursue!"

"Oh no, cousin mine," answered Lovet, "two or three causes combine to prevent me; first, you know I have an old fondness for fighting, merely for fighting's sake, and I would just as soon think of leaving a good dinner untouched, as of going away when a battle is in preparation. Next, you see I have no one to take with me, for dear, sweet, insipid, tiresome Madame de Laussitz has gone back with her fat husband to act up virtue and dignity in their own patrimonial halls. Then thirdly, and lastly, having no object anywhere, I may just as well be here as in another place. Life is getting wonderfully dull to me, Algernon, and I do not even find the same pleasure in a battle that I used to do. However, it is a little more amusing than anything else, and therefore I shall stay and see it. If I am killed, the matter of the future is settled to my hand. If I survive, and the Austrians beat, which I suppose they certainly will, I shall set spurs to my horse, and give him such a gallop as he has not had since he was bitten. If the Bohemians, by any chance, win the victory, I shall go on with them and help them to sack Vienna. I never saw a capital city pillaged, and it must be very amusing."

He spoke in the most ordinary tone possible; in which, perhaps, there was a slight touch of habitual affectation; but Algernon Grey, who could not view things so lightly, nor treat them so when he regarded them otherwise, pondered upon his words, and after a moment's silence, asked, "What makes you think it so positively certain that the Austrians will be successful? We have often known a battle won with a much greater disparity of numbers."

"Come with me and I will show you, Algernon," answered William Lovet; and, walking on till they came to the third tower from the gate, they passed the only sentinel they had seen, giving the word in answer to his challenge, and then issuing forth from the town, mounted their horses and rode on to the Star.

"Now let us send the beasts back," said Lovet, when they reached the foot of the Weissenberg; "and mounting by this little

path on foot, we shall have a full view of this grand army, which is to do such mighty things to-morrow."

Algernon Grey followed in silence, after ordering the page to inform young Christian of Anhalt that he would be back in half an hour. For about three or four hundred yards, as they ascended, the army was hidden from their sight by some tall trees and bushes; but they could see the glare of the watch-fires spreading out into the sky, and hear the murmuring roar of many voices; for the wine and provisions had raised the spirits of the soldiery for a time, and they were wearing away the night in laughter and in song. No sentinel harred their path; no guard demanded the word; for, although strict orders had been issued by the general for extraordinary precautions to be taken, the demoralization of the soldiery, which had been collected on the Weissenberg to support the force under Christian of Anhalt, had become so great before his arrival, that no command was obeyed, except by the force immediately under his own orders; and the sentries, after having been placed, quietly retired to rejoin their comrades round the watch-fires, as soon as the eyes of the officers were withdrawn.

Turning the little patch of underwood, Algernon Grey and Lovet came suddenly upon a group of eight men, stretched out around a pile of blazing wood, singing, jesting, wrangling, with their wild countenances, long shaggy beards and hair, strange apparel, and various kinds of arms designating them as some of the Transylvanian hordes of Bethlem Gabor. They started up at the two fine, handsome-looking men who approached, with a look of savage curiosity, but took no further notice, and the man who was singing even did not interrupt his music. It was a wild, rude air, but not without much plaintive melody; for, though the song seemed to be a bacchanalian one, yet the general tone was melancholy, or seemed so to the ear of Algernon Grey.

"Speak to them, Algernon, speak to them," said Lovet, after they had watched them for a moment or two.

"They will not understand a word I say," answered his cousin. "Do you not see? These are the Transylvanians."

"Oh," answered Lovet, and walked on.

Without saying another word, he led the way along the rise of the hill, on which was spread out the force of the auxiliaries, and a length came to a small open space kept by a sentinel or two of Christian of Anhalt's force, to prevent any tumult, or quarrelling between the Bohemians and Transylvanians. Here the two gentlemen were challenged; but, giving the word, they passed on through the Bohemian bivouacs, where, in some degree, more order and discipline was observable. From time to time, indeed, a scene of great noise and confusion presented itself; and once or twice blows were given, and even knives drawn, so that the constant interference of the officers was required to keep peace amongst a violent and easily excited people. In other places, however, the men were stretched out around their fires asleep; and here and there they were talking quietly, though with somewhat gloomy and discontented looks.

"Now, ask some of these fellows, Algernon," said Lovet, "how they like the prospect of to-morrow?"

"I do not speak Bohemian," answered Algernon Grey.

"But do not they understand, German?" asked his cousin.

"Not a word," said Algernon, gazing in his face; "you would not persuade me, Lovet, that you have been so long amongst them without discovering that fact."

"No," replied Lovet; "but I have discovered something more, Algernon, that the discord is not only in the tongues of this host, though Babel could scarcely match it in confusion of languages, but in the spirit, character, customs, views, and feelings, of those who compose it. It is, in fact, a mere mob of different nations, English, Scotch, Germans, Bohemians, Transylvanians, Silesians, Moravians, and Dutch, without one common bond between them, not understanding each other's tongues, no man having a fellow-feeling for his neighbour, no zeal, no esprit de corps, and one-half of them not knowing what they are brought here for at all. Now I say, that if this corps beats the regular and well-disciplined Austrians and Bavarians, it must be by a miracle from heaven; for no human means will ever produce such a result—so now good-night, cousin; I shall go to my tent and sleep; for as there is a chance of this being the last evening of my life, I have taken care to make it a merry one, and I am tired of amusement of different kinds."

"Good-night," said Algernon Grey; and shaking hands, they parted.

At the door of his tent the young English nobleman found his servant, Tony, and the page, Frill, conversing together in low tones; and, on asking if they had delivered his message to the young Prince of Anhalt, he was informed that Christian had gone forth to make a round through the camp, and had not yet returned. Algernon Grey perceived that there was a sort of hesitation in the manner of both his attendants; that Frill gazed at the elder servant, and the old man turned his eyes to the page; but, suspecting that both might entertain some apprehensions regarding the ensuing day, he did not choose to encourage any questions, and walked at once into the tent.

"Give it yourself, Frill, give it yourself," said Tony, loud enough for his lord to hear; "has the devil of impudence abandoned you that you dare not do what it is your duty to do, when you dare do so much that you ought not?"

Algernon Grey had seated himself before the little table, and the next instant Frill entered the tent, and approached with a paper in his hand, saying, "This dropped from you, my lord, as you were dismounting at the foot of the hill. I found it under the horse's feet."

Algernon Grey took the paper from his hand, and looked at it for a moment before he opened it. He did not recollect its shape and appearance at all. It was folded as if it had been placed in a cover, in form like an ordinary letter, but without seal or address; there was the mark of a horse's shoe across it, so that the boy's story of where he had found it was thus far confirmed; and Algernon Grey unfolded it and held it to the lamp. The handwriting was

not unfamiliar to him, for he had twice in his life received a letter in the same; but the tone was very different from that in which he had ever himself been addressed, although his relation with the writer might have justified the warmest language that woman can use towards a man.

"A whole year and more has passed," so ran the letter, "and yet you have not returned, nor accomplished that which you undertook. I thirst to see you, to cast myself into your arms again. I thirst in the midst of all these people, barren and insignificant to me, for the sight of him I love, as the traveller in the desert thirsts for the cool well. Yet come not till it is accomplished; but strive, if you do love me, to accomplish it soon. Take any means,—take all means. Tell him that I hate him; that I shall ever hate him; that his cold and precise nature can never assimilate with my fiery and impetuous disposition; that those who linked us to one another, tried to bind flame and ice together. Tell him, that I say that I hate him. Tell him, if you will, that I love you. Require him to break this bond, as has been often done before; and let him know, if he persists, it shall be for his own wretchedness; that every hour of his union with me shall be an hour of misery; that every minute shall have its grief, or woman's wit shall fail me. If all this does not decide him, you must seek some other means. I leave them to you, but the man's life cannot be charmed; at all events, do what you have to do speedily, my William, and then fly to my arms. I will not put my name, but there will be no need of guessing twice. Farewell!"

Algernon Grey laid down the letter on the table, and gazed at it sternly for a moment, then raised his eyes to the page, who had retired to the other side of the tent near the entrance.

"Come hither, boy," he said, and as the youth, with a slow and faltering step, advanced towards him, his lord added, "you have read this letter?"

"A part, my lord," replied Frill, with his knees shaking. "Tony thought I had better read it to find out whom it belonged to."

"You do not pretend to say," continued Algernon Grey, "that when you had read it, you believed it belonged to me?"

The boy hesitated and turned crimson, and then murmured, "Tony thought it ought to belong to you, whoever it was sent to."

"Call him hither, and return yourself," said Algernon Grey; but the boy had not far to go, for the old servant was still waiting without. When he appeared, however, his air and manner was different from that of the page; he seemed very grave indeed, but calm and firm, and while the boy slunk behind him, he advanced boldly to the table by which his lord sat.

"How is it," said Algernon Grey, "that you, an old and faithful servant of my house, I might say almost a friend, have induced this boy to deceive me into reading a letter which was never intended for my eye?"

"Because, my lord," replied Tony, "that there were things never intended for your eye, which it is right and necessary you should see; a great many things, never intended for your ear, that it is only just you should hear."

"Indeed!" said Algernon Grey. "In this, however, you have done wrong, though I doubt not that your intention was good. You should never attempt to deceive. You should have spoken to me boldly and straightforwardly, and I might have thanked you then for information which now is burdensome to me."

"Why, you forbade me, my lord, ever to say anything to you against your cousin, Sir William, again; you thought I was prejudiced about him, that I had some hatred towards him, and so, when a means came of opening your eyes, I determined I would take it at any risk, otherwise I could have told you a great deal about this long ago."

"From what source came your information?" asked Algernon Grey.

"First from old Paul Watson," answered Tony, "who was killed at Rakonitz. When we were coming out of Heidelberg, just before the thunderstorm, he told me that your cousin had been spending all his time, before he came abroad hither, in making love to the lady Catherine, though he knew her to be your affianced wife. Then, my good lord, when we first came to this place, and the king's courier went over to England, I got him to take a letter for me to my brother, who soon sent me plenty more intelligence, which I will show you, if we live over to-morrow."

"To what effect?" asked his master, in a low deep tone.

"To the effect that this has been going on for years," answered Tony; "and that there is many a strange and scandalous story in the country which makes this woman no wife for you, my lord."

"And yet she is my wife," muttered Algernon Grey to himself; then waving his hand to the servant, he said, "Leave me."

The page instantly withdrew; but Tony lingered for a moment or two, and then said, "I hope you will forgive me, my lord; for I see that this has made you very unhappy. I can't help thinking, however, that it is little worth while to vex one's self about such a woman, when there is more than one of the sweetest and the best, who would be happy enough to be your wife."

A faint smile crossed Algernon's Grey's countenance. "It is not her conduct makes me unhappy, my good friend," he answered; "it is long since any thing that she could do has had such an effect. I have known her thoroughly for some time; but that a man, my near relation, my pretended friend and old companion, should take part in bringing disgrace upon my name, and enter into such black schemes as these"—and he laid his hand upon the letter—"does grieve and astonish me; does shake my confidence in human virtue and honour, and makes me doubt whether friendship is anything but a mere shadow, honesty but an idle name."

"No, my lord, no," cried the servant; "it all comes of your shutting your eyes to your cousin's behaviour, even from your boyhood. You thought everybody was prejudiced against him; that we hated him without cause; but, bless you, my good lord, we knew him from his youth, and had plenty of opportunities of seeing what you never saw. You great noblemen are, doubtless, clever and more learned than we

are; but we poor people have got our eyes and can't help making use of them. I never saw Sir William do anything from a good motive, I never saw him do anything straightforwardly. I never heard of any act of kindness; and you may judge what we think, when we have watched for the whole of the last year, day and night, I may say, for fear you should have a shot in the head, or a blade in the heart, that did not come from the hands of a fair enemy."

"No, no," cried Algernon Grey, waving his hand, warmly; "there, at least, you do him wrong. Passion may mislead, but he is incapable of such acts as that; and, had he been so inclined, he has had plenty of opportunities."

"Not so many as your lordship thinks," answered Tony; "for there has been always some one near at hand. However, I think, that is all nonsense, too; for it seemed to me there was more to lose than to gain by killing you; but the other men would fancy it, and there is never any harm in being too careful. He will be in a fine fright when he finds the letter is gone for I do not doubt that it dropped from him, although it was under your horse's feet that the boy found it."

"Give me some paper from that roll," said Algernon Grey, "and the yellow wax there—nay, it matters not. Here are persons coming. Begone now, my good friend; and remember, not one word of this to any other being, till I have myself well considered how to act."

As he spoke Christian of Anhalt entered the tent, and the old servant bowed and retired.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE daybreak, Algernon Grey was up and dressed, and, to say the truth, it was no pain to him to rise, for he had not closed his eye all night, and he was more weary of toying to and fro on the sleepless couch, than he had passed the hours by the side of the watch-fire. As soon as his buff coat had been cast on and looped, and his sword-belt thrown over his shoulders, he lighted his lamp, and read over again the letter that had been placed in his hands the night before. A smile of some bitterness came upon his countenance, and, folding it carefully up, he walked out of his tent, and, ascending the highest part of the hill, gazed over the scene below. The stars were growing somewhat faint in the heavens, but the diminution of their lustre was the only sign yet visible of approaching day. All below was still. The wearied troops were sleeping by the nearly extinguished watch-fires; and the tread of a distant sentry, as he paced up and down, could just be heard, marking, rather than breaking, the silence. The murmur of the river, too, reached the ear, but with a silly sound, full of repose and quiet. Folding his arms upon his breast, Algernon Grey continued to gaze over the shadowy lines of tents and waggons down to the valley below, where lay a light morning mist, giving a white gleam soft and pleasant to the eye, and then he turned his look towards the heavens, and his lips murmured with prayer. A minute or two after, a faint grey streak was seen in the east: it then

acquired an orange hue; and one or two light-grey clouds overhead began to glow with spots of a lurid red. Soon after, the orange turned to a fiery crimson, and floods of rose-coloured rays came pouring over the sky; while the grey air between the tents was mingled with a dim mysterious purple. A solitary figure passing here and there was seen. The neighing of a horse broke the silence. A dull hum gradually succeeded; then brisk and lively sounds. A drum beat in a distant part of the camp; and, just when the broad sun showed half his disc above the horizon, red and fiery, as if ominous of the bloody strife about to take place, the boom of a single cannon shook the air, and all became life and activity.

With a quick step, the young Englishman descended from the spot where he had been standing, paused for a moment or two, some twenty paces down the hill, and gazing out towards a distant point, shading his eyes with his hand; then resumed his course, and bent his steps direct towards the tent of William Lovet. He found one of his cousin's servants at the entrance; and, asking the man whether his master were up, was informed that he had just gone forth.

"There he goes, my lord, along that path," said the man, pointing still farther down the hill; and, instantly advancing with a quick step, Algernon Grey cut him off just as he reached a little open space, which divided the tents of the English and Scotch volunteers from the ground occupied by a small party of Palatine troops.

"Ah, Algernon!" exclaimed Lovet, turning round at the sound of a quick step; "is that you? I was going to seek you; for there is a rumour that Bavarian foragers are in sight."

"I have seen them," answered Algernon Grey, in a tone peculiarly calm and gentle; "at least I have seen what I consider to be reconnoitring parties of the enemy. A battle is, therefore, certain, ere the day be over; and as no one knows who may come out of this field alive, it is as well we should have a private word or two before we enter it."

"Ah, my grave cousin," cried Lovet with a laugh, "are you preparing against the worst? Good faith! I never think it worth while to fancy that the ball has yet been cast which is destined to take my life."

"Nor do I dwell upon such thoughts," answered Algernon Grey; "but still there are particular events, my good cousin, which form epochs in the life of man, as others form epochs in the histories of states, and it is as well to take those moments to wind up old accounts, and leave the coming time clear and free for a different course of action."

There was something peculiar, firm, almost stern, in Algernon Grey's tone, which struck William Lovet a good deal, for he had rarely heard that tone employed towards himself, and he knew well that it was an indication of his cousin's mind being strongly moved. Nevertheless he could not restrain his ordinary jesting spirit, or else be judged that light merriment was the best means of covering deeper thoughts. "On my life, Algernon," he said, "if you wish to wind up our accounts, I cannot agree, for I have not the ledger about me. It

is a large book and the roll of long standing—I do not carry it about me."

"I do," answered Algernon Grey; "there is the last item," and he put into his cousin's hand the letter which I have already laid before the reader.

William Lovet took it and opened it. The moment his eye fell upon the writing, in spite of habitual self-command, the colour slightly mounted into his cheek, and his lip turned somewhat white. The next instant, however, he looked up with a clear eye and a curling lip, saying, "You have read it?"

"Every word," answered Algernon Grey, calmly. "It was given to me as a paper belonging to myself, and I read it throughout: not finding a name which could lead me to the right owner, till the last few lines met my eye."

"It is a precious epistle," said Lovet, holding it with the coolest air imaginable, and then placing it in his pocket; "not quite so eloquent as one of St. Paul's, nor so edifying, cousin mine. But yet, she is a glorious creature, and, as you must have long perceived, I am over head and ears in love with her."

"I have not long perceived it," answered Algernon Grey, bitterly; "had I long perceived, William, my conduct might have been different. You have mistaken me, sir. It would seem that you cannot comprehend straightforward conduct and direct dealing; for, had you done so, you would have told me all this when first we met after so long a parting. Instead of that, by crooked means and side-long instigations, you have been urging me to steps tending to the gratification of your own wishes. I will not pause to recapitulate all those acts and words, the true meaning of which is now as clear to me as day. Suffice it, that you love this woman, or her great wealth, and that you have used every sort of artifice to induce me to take these steps, which must necessarily tend to the annulling of my incomplete marriage with herself. Is it not so?"

"Perfectly," answered William Lovet, with the coolest possible assurance; "I have done so most deliberately and considerably; and I trust that you are duly grateful for it. My dear Algernon, do not look so fierce. Recollect that I am not one on whom frowning brows have any effect; but listen to a little quiet reason; though, I must say, you are the most unreasonable man I ever met with. Now, if a poor man has an oyster in his hand and wants to eat the delicate fish, he must open it with whatever instrument happens to be nearest to him. Would you have him wait till he can go to a cutler's, or an ironmonger's, to buy himself an oyster-knife? If he has a dagger, he uses the dagger; if not, he takes a stone and hammers it open; if no stone is at hand, he dashes it on the ground and breaks it so. Then must he wait for vinegar and pepper, a soft manchet-roll, and a glass of sack? Oh, no, he scoops it out and swallows it whole, licks his lips, and thanks the gods for the good gift of oysters. Such is my case: I took the means nearest at hand to obtain my object, and, thinking it much better for your honour and credit, that you should be the person to decline the fulfilment of a contract passed upon you by a couple of grey-

headed grandaires, than that the lady should curtsy low and say, I won't. I prompted you to all things that I thought conducive to your happiness, and, at the same time, to my little schemes. But see what an ungrateful thing is man! Here you set yourself upon the pedestal of injured innocence, and look stout and stalwart, as if you would cut the throat of the man who has done you the greatest possible service."

"Service!" exclaimed Algernon Grey. "Do you call this service?"

"To be sure," answered Lovet, laughing. "A pretty life you would have led with this fair lady. There, read her epistle over again;" and he took it from his pocket. "You cannot have perused it carefully. Not only you have had a sweet and comfortable companion, full of matrimonial tenderness and domestic duty, but, possibly, a tranquil passage to another state, somewhat more speedy than the ordinary course of nature, unless you had a special taster of your food, and kept all sharp instruments under lock and key."

"And can you really dream of wedding such a thing as you describe?" asked his cousin.

"Oh, yes, as soon as she is wedable," answered William Lovet. "I am a very fearless animal, fond of riding wild horses, and know, moreover, how to manage them; but in this matter do as you like, kind cousin Algernon. Go back, if it so please you, and ratify your boy's marriage. The lady will soon be a widow, I will warrant; or, if you are wise, do as I have always urged you, take some step to break this boyish union—any step you please; you will find her right ready to second your wishes; and a little interest at court, a good word to the bishops, and humble petition to the King will settle the matter in six weeks. However, you may look upon it now, I shall expect your deep gratitude for all that I have done; and when you are wedded to the lady that you love, and I to her I seek, we will each rule our household in different ways; and we will meet at Christmastide and Easter, and, like a couple of pair of cooing doves, congratulate ourselves in soft murmurs on our separate happiness."

"My gratitude will be limited to the occasion, William," cried his cousin; "for my part I'll never seek to see you more. I find that from the time I left my native land, you have been seeking to withhold, if not to withdraw from me, the affections of one bound to me by ties she should have thought indissoluble."

"Affection that you never sought to cultivate yourself," said Lovet, tartly.

"I was bound, as you well know, by a solemn pledge not to return till five years," said Algernon Grey; "but, at all events, it was not a cousin's part nor a friend's to strive to poison my domestic peace—nay, nor even to put it in peril, for who can say whether this marriage can be dissolved?—nay, let me speak out, for time wears,—if we both survive this battle, I beseech you to return to England with all possible speed, tell your fair paramour, that I am aware of all, and that I will take instant means to do my best that her kind wishes shall be gratified, that the contract between her and me shall come to an end; and, at the same

time, entreat her to use all those keen measures which her shrewd wit can suggest, and her bold courage execute, to second my endeavours. Between you both, doubtless you will find the matter easy. So farewell!"

He turned upon his heel, and walked a few steps away, but ere he had gone far, he heard Lovet's voice exclaiming, "Algernon, Algernon!"

"Were you ever at a wedding," asked his cousin coming up, as he paused, "where a harsh old father, taken in by a coaxing girl, gave his daughter away to the very man she loved!—have you not seen how she came back to kiss the dear old man's hand, and seemed reluctant to go, and talked of the sweet delights of her domestic home, and a world of courting tenderness taught men and women from their childhood, about infant joys and early pleasures; while, in her heart, she felt like a freed bird with the door of its cage just open! Get thee gone, my noble cousin! Thou art like this same bride; and, say what you will, this letter has taken a load of care from your shoulders; and, on my life! so much do I love you, that, had I known how balmy and peaceful would be its effects, I would have shown it to you long ago. There, take it and keep it as a tender memorial of your dear and devoted Catharine; and, whenever you think of her large, flashing black eyes, her Juno brow, and curling lip, read some passages from that tender epistle, and, falling down upon your knees, thank Heaven for having given you such a cousin as myself."

"I will keep it," said Algernon Grey, taking the letter from his hand; "but there is one thing, my good cousin, which, for your own sake, you should know. This is not the first intimation that I have had of my so-called wife's infidelity to her engagements with me, though it is the first that you, my kinsman and companion, had a share, alas! in her breach of faith. Perhaps you do not understand my meaning; but you must be of a different wit from that I think, if you so softly believe the woman who would thus act towards me will treat you better."

"Oh, you speak of sundry small amours with which the sweet lady has consoled the weary hours of my long absence," answered Lovet, with his cheek a little heated; "that will be easily pardoned, and my presence will set all right again. I am no jealous fool, as Algernon, and can pardon a reasonable amount of coquetry in a lovely woman, left with no one to keep her thoughts from stagnating." And Lovet, turning away with a laugh, took his way back to his own tent.

There are some minds upon which the discovery of baseness and treachery in those who have been trusted, is so painful as to counterbalance, and even more than counterbalance, any portion of relief and happiness that is sometimes obtained under the over-ruling hand of fate, from the very means employed to thwart, to grieve, and to disappoint us. Such was the case with Algernon Grey in the present instance. It must not be denied that it was a relief to him to feel that he had reason of a motive and a just cause for striving, by every means, to annul a contract which had been so-

tered into rather by his parents than himself, long ere he had the power of judging, or acting, on his own behalf; but yet the character of his cousin now stood before him in all its naked deformity, and it offered a painful subject of contemplation, that no prospect of happiness could banish.

He would fain have had a few moments for thought; and was turning his steps towards his own tent, when a large party of young men advancing towards him impeded his way, and the next moment the voice of the younger Prince of Anhalt calling him by name made him turn towards the slope above. As soon as he perceived that the young Englishman heard him, he waved him up; and as soon as Algernon was by his side, he exclaimed, "Come hither, come hither, I have something to show you."

"I think I know what you would say, my Prince; I have already seen some parties in that wood towards Pilsen. They are Bavarians, I should think."

"Then the battle is certain," said Christian of Anhalt. "You will charge with me, will you not?"

"Assuredly," cried Algernon Grey; "but I think we had better communicate the news to your father, as there may be yet time, if we can get the men to work, to strengthen our position here a little."

"Come then, come," said the young Prince; "he will be glad to see you. I told him half an hour ago of the news you brought last night from Prague; and he said, 'God send the Queen have power enough to make her husband come; but I doubt it.' I doubt too, to tell you the truth, my friend; and his presence at this moment were worth ten thousand men. Will your cousin be of our band? I saw you speaking with him just now."

"We spoke together for the last time, perhaps, in life," answered Algernon Grey; "he has done me wrong—has been doing so for years—"

"And you have found him out at length," said Christian of Anhalt, interrupting him with a smile. "We have understood him better. There is not a man in the camp who would trust him."

"And yet," answered Algernon Grey, "he is a good soldier, and a brave man. You had better have him and his people with you."

"Not I," answered Christian of Anhalt.

"True it is, my friend, we cannot unveil the bosoms of those who surround us, and see the thoughts and purposes within; but, on my life! were it possible, I would not take one man along with me, when I go to fall upon the enemy's ranks, whose heart is not pure and high, whose thoughts and purposes, as they lie open to the eye of God, might not lie open to the eye of man. And shall I have the company of one whom I know to be a villain! I always fancy that it is such men as this who bring the bullets most thick amongst us."

Algernon Grey shook his head with a sigh, for he was well aware that in the wise but mysterious ways of Heaven, the lead and the steel as often seem to seek out the noble and the good as the mean and the wicked.

As they had been thus conversing, they had walked on towards the tent of the general,

whom they found seated with several other officers taking a hasty meal. The intelligence they gave soon brought that meal to a conclusion; and for several hours every effort was made to induce the men to strengthen the position of the Bohemian army on the hill. The spirit of insubordination, however, was too strong for authority. Some would not work at all, saying that they were soldiers and not grave-diggers. Some slunk away after having begun; and none but a few English and Germans exerted themselves with anything like energy and perseverance.

Little, very little was effected; and, in the mean while, news came from the various reconnoitering parties that had been thrown out, of the rapid approach of the Austrian and Bavarian army. Some had caught sight of one body, some of another; but still the day wore on ere they appeared in sight; and the Prince of Hohenloe, and several others of the commanders, began to doubt that a battle would take place that day.

Old Christian of Anhalt shook his head: "Maximilian of Bavaria," he said, "will fight as soon as he comes up, depend upon it; he must either fight or starve; and one night to him is of more consequence than even to us."

All that the individual exertions of a man could effect, was done by the old Prince himself. He strove to the best of his power to array and encourage the forces. He told them that the King would be with them in an hour. He pointed to the walls and guns of Prague, and said, that with such support as that, with strong hands and brave hearts, they had no need to fear any army were it of ten times their own numbers. His countenance was gay and cheerful, as he rode from rank to rank, whatever doubts might be in his heart; but he failed in raising the spirits of the greater part of the troops; and by all, with the exception of the cavalry under the command of his son, he was listened to with dull and heavy brows, and an aspect of doubt and uncertainty.

When he and his little train had reached the middle of the line, a horseman rode up to him from Prague, and spoke a few words in a low tone. The old man's cheek grew red; and he muttered between his teeth: "In the church! sin and death! What does he in the church? Why does he not pray here in the eye of the God of battles, and in the presence of his soldiers?"

"I shall have to go and cut Sculltetus's throat, to stop his long-winded preaching," said the Prince's son, who was close by.

"Hush!" cried the old general; and, raising his voice, he added in a loud tone, "the King will be here immediately, my friends; and under his eye you will fight for his crown and your own rights."

"The heads of the columns are appearing on the right, your Highness," cried Algernon Grey, in a whisper.

"I am glad of it," answered Christian of Anhalt. "The sooner this is over, the better—some one ride down to those Hungarians; tell them to bend back upon the hill; so far advanced, they show our flank to the enemy. Let their right rest upon your little summer-house; it is quite far enough advanced. You go, Le-

pepp;" and, riding on, he continued on his exhortations to the men, every now and then sending off an officer with orders to one part or another of the line; after having reached the end, he turned his horse, and, accompanied by the Prince of Hohenloe and the rest, rode up at a quick pace to the highest part on the hill, beckoning to the man who had brought him news from Prague to follow. His first attention was directed to the movements of the enemy, whose regiments were now gathering thick in the plain below.

A cloud of light troops, manœuvring hither and thither, almost as if in sport, concealed, in some degree, what was taking place in the main body of the army; but the experienced eye of the old commander was not to be deceived; and once or twice he murmured to himself, "If he does that, and we are wise, he is ruined. We shall soon see—now, sir, what is going on in Prague?" and he turned to the officer who had brought him news from the city: "Praying, you say, and preaching too, I suppose. What more!"

"Why, fasting, your Highness," answered the young man, drily; "there is a great banquet prepared for the court after the morning service."

"A banquet!" exclaimed the old Prince furiously; "God's life! who will there be to eat it!—Yes, he will try to cross—No, he is coming farther on.—Praying, and preaching, and fasting, with fifty thousand men at the gates! Has any one got a Bible here!"

"I have," answered a young pale man, standing by on foot; and he handed a small volume to the old commander.

"Let me see," continued Christian of Anhalt, "this is the twenty-third Sunday after Trinity, is it not? and the gospel is the twenty-second of St. Matthew; let me see;" and he sought out the chapter he spoke of, and ran his eye over it in silence for a minute or two: "Ah!" he said, at length, reading from the book: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's"—but, by my grey hair! here comes Cæsar to take them; ay, and to take more than his own too; so we must try and prevent him. Now, my good cousin of Hohenloe, see if you can make out what Maximilian of Bavaria and that damned Walloon, Bucquoi, are doing."

"Methinks they are going to attack the city on the other side," answered the Prince of Hohenloe, who was in command of the troops which had been gathered on the Weissenberg during old Anhalt's retreat.

"No," answered the other, "no; they are looking for a bridge. They will not show us their flank, depend upon it. That would be a greater fault than that which they are going to commit. Ride down to your men, Christian, my boy; wheel them a little upon their right, about the eighth of a circle; and be ready at a moment's notice. I will send down the Englishmen to you, when I see more."

About a quarter of an hour passed, during which the movements of the enemy seemed wavering and uncertain; at the end of that time, however, clouds of skirmishers, Croats and Albanians, as they were called, began to appear on the nearer side of the river. "It may yet be a feint," said Christian of Anhalt;

"it may yet be a feint—they are getting upon that swampy ground. Five minutes more and they cannot help themselves. By heavens! their columns are broken. What is Maximilian of Bavaria about!—he is trying to turn the march—The Austrians still come on—look, look, they are separating; they will never get their artillery over that little bridge! Now, cousin of Hohenloe, now, noble lords and gentlemen, the moment of victory is before us, if we choose to take it. In a quarter of an hour, the marsh, the stream, and a bridge of a span wide will be between Bucquoi and the Duke. Let us sweep down upon the Bavarian, who is already in confusion. We are more than double his numbers; he can receive no support from the Austrians; and if there be a thousand gallant men in our army, he is irretrievably ruined. The same movement brings us on the flank of Bucquoi; and he is between us and the gates of Prague. I say, let us charge at once as one man, and the day is ours."

"But you do not consider, Anhalt," said the Prince of Hohenloe, "that we should lose the advantage of our position; here, upon a high hill, they must climb to attack us, and so derange our whole fire as they advance."

"God of Heaven!" cried Christian of Anhalt.

"I think," said another general officer, close by, "that it would be a pity to give up the great advantage of this ground, which we have taken such pains to obtain."

"Besides," said another, "if we should be repulsed there, we lose the support of Prague, and are totally cut off from the city; we should fight to a disadvantage, and have no place of retreat."

"If we could count upon the zeal and steadiness of our men," cried another, "I should join my voice to the Prince of Anhalt's; but very much doubt them. I believe that each half would disperse ere we met the enemy."

The old commander sat upon his horse in silence, with his teeth set, and his bare hands clasped so tight together, that a part of his brown fingers became quite white. "You are losing the only opportunity of victory," he said at length. "Nay, it is already lost. The Bavarians have turned the march; the Austrians are passing the bridge. Ere we could reach them, they will be once more united. No, naught is to be thought of, but to make as good a fight here as we can. You, Hohenloe, to the left; I command upon the right. Let our artillery open their fire upon the enemy's rear. We may do something to break them as they advance. Let us each to our post; and, in God's name, do our best!"

Thus saying, he turned his horse to ride away; but, after having gone some twenty or thirty yards, he called up one of his train, and said in a low voice, "Ride to the commanders of regiments, and tell them in private, that in case of a disaster, which God forbid, they are to rally their men upon Brandeis. The campaign is not at an end, though a battle may be lost; and, if Prague does its duty, with the help of Mansfeld, we may still defeat the enemy, and save the crown. Here, my young friend," he continued, beckoning to Algersa Grey, "go to my son and tell him to fly back

to his former ground with the cavalry. Let him know that I have been overruled; and, therefore, that movement was vain. He will now, as far as I see, have the Bavarian cavalry in front. We must try early, what a charge upon them will do; but bid him, if successful, not pursue too far, but turn upon the flank of the infantry and charge again. I will send him an order when it is time."

Thus saying, he proceeded on his way; and Algernon Grey, galloping down to the cavalry under the younger Prince Christian, delivered his father's message.

"See what it is to join fools with wise men," said young Christian of Anhalt, in a low bitter tone. "They have ruined us."

"Indubitably," answered Algernon Grey; "and the same timid spirit, if it acts here, will render the battle but a short one. I will just give some orders to my people, in case of the worst, and then take my place; for they are coming on fast."

Thus saying, he turned his horse and cantered quickly round to a spot just over the brow of the hill, where the baggage had been collected and left under the charge of the ordinary servants of the officers, and a small guard. "Here, Frill," he cried, as soon as he could find his own people, "tell the men to keep the horses saddled, and the lighter baggage charged; lead the grey and the roan down towards the gate of the town, with one of the sumpter-horses, and have the barb brought up behind that tree, in case this should be killed. Keep yourself just over the edge of the hill, to be out of the fire. There is no use of risking your life, my poor boy."

"I should like to see the battle, my lord," said the lad; "no harm happened to me at Rakonitz, though I had my beaver shot through."

"Nonsense," answered his master, "do as I have ordered, and let me not see you above the hill. You have money with you, I think, in case of need?"

The boy answered in the affirmative, and Algernon Grey, turning his horse, rode back to the cavalry under Prince Christian of Anhalt, and took his place at the head of his own men. The Austrians were by this time within three hundred yards from the foot of the hill, upon the troops ranged along the edge of which their artillery was playing with but very little effect. The guns of the Bohemian army, however, though only ten in number, were better placed and better served; and at the moment when Algernon Grey returned to the scene of the commencing strife, the balls from a battery of four large pieces were ploughing through the ranks of a large body of the enemy's cavalry just in front, creating tremendous confusion and disarray. He had not been three minutes with his troop, when, looking to the left, he saw a German officer galloping furiously along towards the young Prince of Anhalt, and seeming to call aloud to him as he advanced, though the roar of the artillery prevented his words from being heard. The next moment, however, the young Prince waved his sword high in the air, and shouted "Charge!" The word passed along from mouth to mouth; and at once the spurs were driven into the

horses' sides; the animals sprang forward, and down the slope of the hill, the whole of the cavalry of the left was hurled like a thunder-bolt upon the right wing of the enemy. Everything gave way before them. Men and horses rolled over in the shock; the standard of the Walloon fell; the cavalry was driven back upon the infantry; the infantry was thrown into confusion. A force of Austrian horse, brought up to the support of the Walloons, was broken in a moment; and in that part of the field, for some ten or fifteen minutes, the victory was decided in favour of the Bohemians; but, when all seemed favourable, a thin hard-featured man, on a black horse, wheeled a large body of Bavarian pike-men, supported by a regiment of arquebussiers upon the young Prince's triumphant cavalry. A fierce volley of small arms instantly followed. As Christian of Anhalt was plunging his horse among the pikes, the young leader fell at once almost at the feet of Tilly. Algernon Grey's horse went down at the same moment, but, starting up, he endeavoured to drag his friend from amongst the pikes, receiving a slight wound on the shoulder as he did so; and, as the blow forced him to let go his hold for a moment, two strong Bavarians grasped the Prince by the buckles of the cuirass and dragged him within the line. Another strove to seize the young Englishman; but striking him fiercely over the head with his sword, Algernon freed himself from his grasp, and springing back, caught a masterless horse that was running near, and vaulted into the saddle.

The trumpets of the Bohemian cavalry were sounding a retreat; and spurring after them with two of his own men, who had hastened to his aid, Algernon Grey reascended the hill, and rallied his troops into something like order. All the rest of the field, however, was one wild scene of confusion. Clouds of smoke and dust rolled between the various masses of the army, hardly permitting the eye to distinguish which bodies were keeping their ground, which were flying; but one thing was clear; the enemy were advancing steadily up the hill, and the Bavarian cavalry rallied, and, in good order, outflanking the Bohemian line, were preparing to charge their lately victorious foes. The German infantry, towards the centre of the Bohemian line, seemed firm enough; but the Transylvanians, who had been seen upon the right at the commencement of the fight, were no longer to be perceived; and regiment after regiment of the Austrian troops pouring on in that direction, showed that the ground there was clear of opposition.

"My lord, my lord," said a youthful voice, as Algernon Grey was gazing around him, "the day is lost. All the savages have fled; and the whole right is in confusion and disarray; the men scampering hither and thither, and drowning themselves in the Moldau."

"Go back, go back to the place I told you; wait there for me; but tell the men to get all the baggage as near the gate as they can. My lord, the count," he continued, riding up to an old officer, who was advancing, "one more charge for the honour of our arms."

"With all my heart," said old Count Schlick

"where's the boy, Christian? He did that charge right gallantly."

"He is wounded and taken, my lord," answered Algernon Grey.

"Then I will head the men," said the Count; "they will follow grey hair as well as brown, I will warrant. Let us away."

Riding on to the body of cavalry which had rallied, the old Bohemian nobleman put himself at their head; the word was given to charge; and once more, though with less spirit and in diminished numbers, they swept down to meet the advancing enemy. The right of their horse encountered a body of Walloon cavalry, and forced them to recoil; and there the Bohemian horsemen were soon mingled with the foe hand to hand. But on the left they found the way opposed by a steady regiment of Bavarian pikemen, flanked with arquebusers. The first line hesitated, and drew on the rein at the sight of the forest of pikes before them. A discharge of musketry took them in the flank, and in an instant all was confusion, disarray, and flight. About four hundred horse, with the old Count and Algernon Grey, were left in the midst of the imperial army, no longer united as a single mass, but broken into small parties of combatants; and it soon became evident that the strife could not be maintained any longer.

"Away, away!" cried the Count, riding past the young Englishman; "I have ordered the trumpets to sound a retreat,—but, in Heaven's name, let us save our standard." As he spoke, he pointed to a spot where a banner was floating still, in the midst of a large party of the enemy; and gathering together as many of his own men as he could, Algernon Grey made a charge with the old Bohemian at his side, in order, if possible, to recover it. But the effort was in vain; as they poured down upon the enemy, a pistol shot struck the standard-bearer from his horse, and, closing round the little troop of English and Bohemians, the Walloons soon brought many a brave heart to the ground. Algernon Grey thought of Agnes Herbert, there was nothing but death or captivity if he staid to strike another stroke; all was evidently lost; no object was to be obtained, and, turning his horse, he cleared the way with his sword and galloped up the hill, passing under a furious fire from the musketeers, who were already in his rear.

When he reached the summit, he perceived how vain had been even the last effort. Cavalry and infantry of the Bohemian army were all flying together. The field presented a complete rout, except where, at various points, appeared an Austrian or Bavarian regiment, already in possession of the hill. The artillery, the greater part of the baggage, and all the tents, were in the hands of the enemy; and, spurring on like lightning through the perils that surrounded him, the young Englishman at length reached the tree where the page was waiting, with his own horse and a fresh one for his master. Springing to the ground, Algernon snatched his pistols from the saddle-bow, and leaped upon the back of the other charger.

"Mount and follow, mount and follow," he

cried to the page, and then dashed on towards the gates of Prague.

As he approached, he looked eagerly round for his servants and baggage, at the spot where he had appointed them to be; but they were not to be seen; though, as compared with the rest of the field, the ground and the road in front of the gates were nearly solitary; for the stream of fugitives had taken another direction. As he gazed forward, however, he saw some of the soldiers of the tower in the very act of unlocking the chain of the portcullis, and judging rightly what was about to take place, he struck his spurs into his horse's sides and dashed over the drawbridge. A guard presented a partisan to his breast, calling, "Stand back! We have orders—"

But Algernon Grey turned the weapon aside with his sword; the horse in its furious career dashed the man to the ground; and ere any one else could oppose, the young cavalier and the page were both within the walls of Prague.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the fine old Dome church of Prague, sat Frederic, king of Bohemia, and many of the principal personages of his court. The faint sunshine of a cold November day shone through the tall windows, and one of the pale chilly beams lighted on the bald head and white hair of an old man raised above the rest in a high pulpit, who, with outstretched arm and vehement gesticulation, was declaiming violently against "the woman of the seven hills, and all who bore about with them the mark of the Beast." His piety, indeed, was somewhat blasphemous, and his illustrations exaggerated in character and homely in language, till they became almost ludicrous; but still there was a fierce rude eloquence about him, which captivated his hearers and enchaind their attention. Every eye was turned towards him, every ear was bent to hear, when suddenly a dull heavy sound shook the building, and made the casements rattle in their frames.

The preacher paused, the congregation turned round and gazed in each other's faces, and then roar after roar, came the peal of the artillery from the field where all Frederic's hopes were to find their final overthrow. The young monarch started up with a look of consternation: the congregation followed; and all seemed taken by surprise, and thunderstruck at an event which might have been foreseen by themselves, and had been foreseen by others for weeks before. But there are states of moral apathy—lethargies as it were of the mind, which seem sent by fate to prevent the near impending destruction from giving to the doomed a warning to fly from its approach. Remonstrances had often reached Frederic's ear; urgent appeals had been made to his judgment; every intelligence of the enemy's movements had been communicated to him—but, sunk in listless idleness, or carried away by the pursuit of pleasure, or wrapt in the visions of a fanatical religion, he would not listen, or he would not believe, till the cannon of the field of Prague, roused him thus at once in horror and wonder from the long torpor in which he had lain.

The battle had begun, and he was absent; his subjects and his friends were shedding their blood in his defence, and he was not there to share their peril and direct their efforts. But it was still not too late, he thought. He would fly to the field; he would encourage his soldiers by his presence; he would put himself in the front of his host; he would perish or preserve the crown he had gained. He listened not to the preacher, though Scultetus in a loud voice called on all to wait and listen to a concluding prayer. He heard not the eager but reasonless questions of his surrounding courtiers; he did not even mark the pale face of Camerarius, but, waving his right hand, and grasping his sword scabbard with the left, he exclaimed aloud, "To the field! To the field! Our friends and brethren are dying in arms in our cause! To the field! To the field; and God defend the right!"

Thus saying, he strode at once out of the church, and hurried back towards the palace, calling loudly for his horse. A page ran on to bring out a charger; and many others followed in search of arms, they said; but few were ever seen again by the young monarch's side.

"Where is my horse?" cried Frederic vehemently, as he reached the gates of his residence; "quick, quick! Lose not an instant. Tell the Queen I have gone to lead the troops; tell her—"

"Which horse will your Majesty ride?" demanded an officer of the stables, running forth.

"Any one, fool!" exclaimed the King—"hear you not the cannon! Aught which will carry me to my friends without. Away! Stay not to talk! Have it here in a moment!"

"Will you not arm, sire?" said an old officer, in a persuasive tone.

"No!" cried Frederic, sternly; "as I am with my bare breast, will I face them. Speed is the only armor I would use—but they will drive me mad. Where is my charger! In the name of pity—in the name of Heaven, see, some one, what they are doing! Men will call me coward—my name will be a by-word. They will say, for centuries to come, that, while his brave soldiers were bleeding before Prague, Frederic of Bohemia shunned the field where his crown was to be lost or won."

"Here comes your royal charger," cried a voice; and, springing forward, the monarch put his foot in the stirrup and vaulted on the horse's back.

"Follow, follow! All that love me, follow!" he cried; and without waiting for any one, dashed down at headlong speed towards the gates. The way was long, the streets narrow and steep; but on, on went the unhappy prince till the small triangular space of open ground before the inner ward lay within sight. Then ran up a half-armed guard; and approaching close to his horse's side, said in a low voice,

"They fly, they fly, your Majesty."

His look, his tone, were ominous; for he spoke as if he were afraid lest his words might be heard by any one near; but still Frederic asked with a sinking heart, "Who fly?"

"Our men, sire," answered the soldier.

"Then I go to rally them," cried the King, "or to die with those who stand."

"That might have done an hour ago," said the soldier, bluntly; "but it is now too late."

It is the fate of misfortune to hear hard truths; and this was the first bitter sting of many that Frederic was yet to feel. He stopped not to answer, however, but pushed on past the man, catching a sight at the same time of several of his attendants spurring down after him. The soldiers of the guard-house scarcely saw his approach; for they were all gazing eagerly forth from the outer gate; but, just beyond the drawbridge, he saw a rude Bohemian bleeding from several wounds, and leaning for support against the masonry.

"Ah, sir, the day is lost," cried the man, as the monarch rode past; "the troops are all flying towards Brandeis; half the Hungarians drowned in the river; the infantry all in rout; the cannon taken—" Frederic listened to no more, but still spurred on, dashing his horse through the guards at the outer gate, and gazing eagerly towards the bill.

Who was it coming so rapidly towards him, followed by half a dozen troopers and a single banner! Old Christian of Anhalt, bloody and dusty from the fight, where he had fought hand to hand; no hat upon his head, his grey hair streaming in the wind, his head bent sadly down almost to his horse's neck, and his hands grasping tightly the reins with a bitter and convulsive clasp.

"Anhalt!" cried the King.

"It is all lost, my lord, as I knew it would be," said the old soldier, in a low deep voice.

"Back with us into Prague as fast as may be. The Bavarian is at our heels. Let the walls be well manned, and the cannon pour forth their shot upon the enemy, if they come too near. Let the gates be closed, too; the fugitives are taking another way. Your safety and the defence of Prague are now all we have to think of. We must have counsel with all speed. You, gentlemen," he continued, turning to those who followed, "away to the Rath-house in the old town, as fast as you can ride; take measures with the magistrates for the sure guarding of the walls; and, hark you, Dilluigen, gather every information you can of the temper of the people, and let the king hear at the Hradschin. You will find me there, in case of need. Come, my lord, come; it is vain thinking of what cannot be remedied. The future, the future! still the future! We may make a good fight yet, if Mansfeld will but help—not serve under me! Why, I will be his horseboy, if he will fight like a man. Come, my lord. Nay, nay, be not so cast down! 'Tis but a battle lost, after all. I trust we shall see many such before we die, and win many a one to boot;" and grasping Frederic's hand kindly, he led, rather than followed the Monarch back into the city, giving orders, as they passed the gates, that they should be closed and defended.

The news had spread through Prague that the royal army had been defeated. There were men who had seen the rout from one of the church steeples; the tale had been carried from mouth to mouth, and from house to house; there was scarce a babbling child who did not know it, and repeat it; and, as Frederic and his train passed by, almost every door had its group of men and women, who eyed him—

some sadly, some sullenly—but few, if any, showed a mark of reverence. Some, especially where there was a cross over the door, suffered a half-suppressed grin to appear, as the unfortunate prince rode by; and then went and talked in low tones to their neighbours, pointing significantly over the shoulder to the royal group. All that he saw made the young Monarch's heart more sad; and, when he reached the palace, he led the way straight to the anteroom of his wife's apartments.

The first person whom he met there was Agnes Herbert; but she saw that disaster and ruin were in his eyes, and she dared not ask any questions. Not a servant had been found in the court on the staircase, or in the hall below; and Frederic, turning to her, said in a sad but gentle tone, "I beseech you, lady, seek some of the people, and tell them to send us what counsellors they can find; above all Dohna and Camerarius."

"Camerarius!" cried Christian of Anhalt, warmly; "we want counsel with men, not with weak and doubting subtle-wits like that. Give us the Princesses and Dohna. Old Schlick, I fancy, is dead; for I saw him charge desperately to rescue my poor boy, who is wounded and taken, I hear."

"Well, well," said Frederic; "send some one for Dohna, dear lady; and I will call the Queen. Is your gallant son a prisoner, then, indeed?" he continued, grasping old Anhalt's hand.

"Never mind him," replied the soldier, "God will take care of him. Let us have the Queen, my lord. Her courage and her wisdom now are worth a dozen other counsellors."

In the mean while Agnes left the anteroom with her cheek deadly pale, and her heart feeling as cold as ice. There was a question she would fain have asked, but she dared not breathe it—a question which made her bosom feel heavy, and her limbs shake, even when she put it to herself, "Where was Algernon Grey?" Oh, when she thought of him in that hour, how deep, how strong, how overpowering did she feel that love which she had so long concealed from her own eyes. She grasped the balustrade of the staircase for support; and, though she knew that each moment was precious, she paused at every step. Had she gone forward, she would have fallen.

Suddenly, as she descended, she heard a clang as of an armed man springing to the ground, at the door of the second court which opened below. Then came a step in the stone hall at the foot of the stairs. Oh, how her heart beat; for the quick, sure ear of love recognised the tread at once. She darted down the remaining steps. The next instant he was before her; she sprang forward, and, ere they knew what they did, she was clasped to his armed bosom.

"I have come to keep my promise, dearest," said Algernon Grey; "to aid, to protect, to defend you with my life, if need should be. Where is the Queen? where is the King? I must speak with them both, if possible."

"The King is above," answered Agnes, withdrawing herself from his embrace. "He is with the Prince of Anhalt in the Queen's anteroom, just above the court of St. George. He sent me for one of the attendants to call the Viscount

of Dohna; but I can find no one. Good Heaven! they surely cannot all have abandoned their King and their master already!"

"No, no," answered Algernon Grey; "they have come up on the roofs to see what they can see, or out to gather news. Speed back again, dear Agnes, and tell him I am here; I will seek Dohna, if he lodges where he used. At all events, I will find some one who can call him. Away, dear girl, for I would fain see the King speedily."

Agnes hurried away, with her heart all joyful; for the relief of his coming had swept away the bitterness of all other disasters than that which he had anticipated. What was to her a battle lost, if Algernon Grey was safe! When she entered the antechamber, she found the Queen seated between her husband and Christian of Anhalt; her face raised and turned alternately from one to the other; her look eager and grave, but not at all depressed.

"'Tis the best way," she said, as Agnes entered; "so shall we, at least, gain time for intelligence, for preparation, and for action—doubtless he will grant it. He is our cousin."

"And his troops have had enough to do," answered Christian of Anhalt; "that is the best security. He has as much need of repose as we have. Prague is a hard bone to pick."

"But whom shall we send?" said Frederic. "It must be some man of rank; and there is an old grudge between him and Dohna. Is the Viscount coming, fair lady?"

"I can find none of your attendants, your Majesty," answered Agnes; "but I met Master Algernon Grey in the hall, just alighted, and he undertook to find the Viscount, begging me to tell your Majesties that he wished to speak with you immediately."

"Then he is safe," cried the Queen; "thank God for that!"

"If he is safe, it is not his own fault," exclaimed Christian of Anhalt, "for he fought like a madman when all hope was over. I never saw so cool a head in counsel, and so hot a one in battle. Let us have him here by all means."

"Can we not send the Earl, Frederic?" asked the Queen, laying her hand gently on her husband's arm, and calling him, in the hour of his distress, by the dear familiar name which she never used but in private. "He must throw off this foolish incognito now, and will go, I am sure, in his own name and character, as our envoy, to this proud victor. See for him, my sweet cousin, see for him; and bring him hither with all speed."

Agnes hastened away without reply, and found Algernon Grey already mounting the stairs. He followed her quickly, without even pausing for the words of tenderness that were in his heart; and in a moment after he stood before the King and Queen, who were still nearly in the same position in which Agnes had left them, only that Elizabeth was writing with a rapid hand from her husband's dictation.

"Say four and twenty hours, my lord, the King," exclaimed Christian of Anhalt, interrupting him; "he won't grant more, if so much."

"Well, four and twenty hours be it," answered Frederic. "We can gather force enough in that time to make head."

Elizabeth quickly finished writing, and then pushed the paper over to her husband, who took the pen and signed his name.

"This fair lady tells me you wish to speak with me, my lord," said Frederic, as soon as he had done.

"I wish to represent to your Majesty," replied Algernon Grey, "that the gates of the city being closed so soon before any parties of the enemy are near, may prevent many gallant men, who have already fought well, and will do so again, from finding refuge within these walls, where they might do good service. I myself was nearly excluded, and much of the baggage will, doubtless, be lost which might be saved."

"It was an order given by me in haste, my young friend," replied Christian of Anhalt, "not rightly understood by the frightened people there, and to be amended immediately. I meant them to shut out our enemies, not our friends. But now listen to what his Majesty has to say to you."

"It is simply this, my Lord of Hillingdon," said Frederic; "Will you, in a moment of our need like this, take a flag of truce from the gates, to our cousin, Maximilian of Bavaria, and deliver to him this letter, demanding a suspension of arms for four and twenty hours? You must go in your own character, however; for we cannot send any inferior man to such a Prince in the hour of victory."

"I will be your Majesty's envoy with pleasure," answered Algernon Grey; "and for this night will resume my name and title; but I will beg all here to forget it afterwards, as, for reasons of my own, now more strong than ever, I wish not to have my coming and going bruited about in every part of Europe."

"Be it as you will," answered Frederic; "and many thanks, my lord, for this and all other services. Write on the superscription, dearest lady, 'By the hands of our cousin, the Earl of Hillingdon.'"

Elizabeth wrote, gave Algernon Grey the letter, and raised her eyes to his face, saying, "On your return, whatever be the answer you bring, I must see you for a few moments, my lord. You made me a promise, which I am sure you will fulfil with chivalry and devotion."

"I did not forget it, your Majesty," answered Algernon Grey, looking round with a faint smile towards Agnes; "and I will return to accomplish it as soon as this task is ended. I shall, doubtless, find a flag at the gates; and so I take my leave."

"Stay, I go with you to give better orders," said Christian of Anhalt, "and to furnish a new pass-word to the guards, for I have some fears of these good citizens. Ha! here comes Dohna—I will return immediately;" and thus saying, he withdrew with Algernon Grey.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ALL was confusion and disorder in the streets of Kleinseite (or smaller side) of the city of Prague, as old Christian of Anhalt returned from the gates. The lower classes of citizens were hurrying hither and thither, or collected into crowds wherever a more open space was

to be found, and eagerly and vociferously discussing past events and future contingencies. Lowering brows, angry looks, and vehement gestures were seen everywhere; but no one ventured in any way to insult the old commander as he rode along, for not alone did his frank and straightforward bearing, and gallant conduct in the field command respect, but as the gates of the town he had found some thirty or forty cavaliers who, amongst the last to quit the field, had sought shelter under the guns of the fortress, and now accompanied him on his way to the palace. There all the servants and officers were once more reassembled, and affecting to perform their several duties; but the scared look, the eager haste, the abstracted manner, all showed consternation; and on mounting to the apartments of the Queen, the Prince found that terror was not confined to the inferior inhabitants of the residence.

A number of Frederic's counsellors had by this time assembled, and, with the exception of Dohna, each seemed more terrified than his neighbour. The presence of their sovereign, the importance of calm discussion, not even the heroic courage displayed by the Queen herself, could restrain them from talking all at once. Some urged instant flight, some unconditional surrender, and the boldest of them only ventured to suggest an attempt to gain time by unning negotiations with the enemy. Frederic himself was tranquil and resolute in his air and tone; but in opinion he seemed wavering and uncertain.

The authority of the old soldier, his plain rough speech, sound sense, and stern firmness in the hour of danger, made some impression; but Christian of Anhalt soon saw that as usual with the weak and crafty, where stratagem is out of time, and presence of mind does not exist, the greater part of those present were still confusing counsel with vain speculations, with idle repetitions, and suggestions utterly inapplicable to the circumstances of the moment.

"We must get rid of these men, your Majesty," he said, drawing Frederic aside; "half of them are cowards, and almost all the rest are fools only fit for the monkey tricks of diplomacy. We want men of energy and action. Let us keep Dohna as a skillful and firm counsellor, and send for young Thurn. Where his father is, I know not. I saw him very late in the field."

"He is at his own house," said Frederic; "he sent word he would dine, and then come hither."

"'Tis so like him!" cried Anhalt; "he has fought himself into an appetite. But have I your permission to send these men away?"

"Yes, but courteously, my friend, courteously," replied Frederic.

"Oh, courteously, of course," answered the old man, with a smile. "Gentlemen," he continued, "an envoy has been sent to the enemy's head quarters. In less than an hour we shall hear more, and till then can decide upon nothing. It may be that we shall have to quit Prague to-morrow; so I would advise all—as every man has some private papers, and most men some little property—to employ the next few minutes in preparing for whatever may be the result. His Majesty will excuse your attendance for an hour—stay Dohna, stay!" he

added in a low voice, "we shall want you. We are going to send for the two Thurns, and have calm counsel instead of frightened bubble."

The other counsellors hastened away, eager to save their papers and effects; and the moment they were gone a messenger was despatched to old Count Thurm and his son Count Bertina. "But ere he had quitted the room two minutes, there was heard a knock at the door, and the younger count entered in haste with the Baron of Dillenghen, who had been sent to the town hall.

"What is it, gentlemen?" exclaimed the Queen, as soon as she saw them; "there is alarm in both your faces. Has any new disaster happened?"

"No, madam," replied the young count; "but Dillenghen has some news of importance, which I fear I must confirm."

"Speak! speak!" cried Frederic, turning to the baron. "What tidings bring you, sir? Is the enemy advancing?"

"No, sire," answered the Baron of Dillenghen; "but my lord of Anhalt here bade me collect what tidings I could of the temper of the people and the magistrates. I grieve to say it is not good. They show no willingness to defend the lower town—declare it is untenable, and there is much murmuring amongst them at the very thought."

"What is to be done?" cried Frederic, turning to the Prince of Anhalt with a look of consternation.

"Go up to the Wyschehrad," answered Anhalt; "we can make it good for a long while, till we are able to draw men enough together to overawe these burghers and take the defence out of their hands."

"My lord, I fear they are not to be overawed," rejoined Dillenghen; "in a word, there is treason amongst them."

"Ay, and even in your Majesty's very court and palace," added Bertrand of Thurm.

"That I know," answered Frederic, in a sad and bitter tone; "do you recollect, Elizabeth, my letter from Rakonitz? But still I thought the citizens were true."

"So far from it, sire," said Bertrand of Thurm, "and so pressing is the danger, that I was bold enough, ere I came up, to order the Queen's carriage to be made ready with all speed. When you are both safe on the other side of the water, where I can rely upon my garrison, these turbulent burghers may be brought to reason. Now I would lose no time, but depart instantly. Your attendants can follow, with all that may be necessary to bring from the palace. I would not lose a moment, for to know that you are in their power gives the traitors a bold front."

"I must take some of my poor girls with me," cried Elizabeth—"poor Ann Dudley, and Amelia of Solms, and my sweet Agnes; but I will be back directly."

As the Queen opened the door to retire into her bed-chamber, a voice of bitter lamentation was heard from within; and Christian of Anhalt exclaimed, "Would to God that these women would learn a lesson of fortitude from their high-souled mistress. What will howling do to avert peril?"

"Be not harsh, my friend," said Frederic;

"that is poor Ann Dudley's voice. Her husband's body lies on that bloody field without. The tidings came just ere you returned. But here is the Queen again. Now let us go, I will send orders afterwards for all that may be needed. Come, sweet friend—methinks with you beside me, I can never know despair;" and taking Elizabeth's hand, he drew it through his arm and led her down slowly, for she was great with child.

The splendid carriage of blue velvet embroidered with silver stood ready in the court; and, as Elizabeth's eyes fell upon its gorgeous decorations, a faint sad smile came upon her lip, and she shook her head mournfully. Oh, how the emptiness of pomp and pageantry, and lordly state, is felt by the heart in the bitter hours of sorrow and adversity, and while the riches of the soul, the love, the friendship, the trust, the tenderness, rise high in value, sink low the more sordid objects of earthly ambition and pride.

A weeping train followed the Queen to the carriage; some entered with her; some followed in other vehicles, or on foot; and but two, of all the fair and sparkling train which had shared Elizabeth's days of joy and splendour, seemed now in a condition to give her comfort and support. Amelia of Solms was sad, but she wept not; Agnes Herbert grave, but firm, though gentle in her whole demeanour. With kindly care, she whispered from time to time some words of consolation in the ear of poor Ann Dudley, and though her beautiful eyes were full of melancholy when she gazed at the Queen, yet there was a hopefulness in her words which added to the strength of mind with which Elizabeth bore up under the griefs and perils of the hour.

It seemed a long and weary way to the old citadel of Prague, as with slow steps the horses dragged the carriages up the ascent; but the gates at length were reached, and Frederic took his fair wife in his arms and carried her into the wide hall; but he could not forbear saying with a sigh, "I now know where I am. Princes seldom learn the truth till they are taught it by adversity."

An hour went by; and many a messenger came up from the lower town, each burdened with gloomy tidings. The horses and carriages were all brought up from the stables of the Hradsehn, and some small sums of money, clothes, and papers; but it was soon found that the council of citizens had taken possession of the building, and though they did not exactly prevent the King's servants from removing his own property, yet there were questions asked and objections made, which rendered the task slow and difficult. Night fell, and the confusion in the town increased. The light of numerous torches created a glare which was seen red and portentous from the Wyschehrad; and a loud murmur like the roar of a distant sea rose up and filled the watching hearts above with vague and gloomy apprehensions.

Old Count Thurm had speedily joined the royal party, and a number of devoted friends surrounded Frederic and his Queen; but those who knew the Bohemian capital best did not contribute, by their warnings, to raise hopes or to still anxieties.

They represented the probability of tumult and violence as great, and all seemed convinced that treason had long been preparing the way for the state of mind the people now displayed.

At length loud but distant shouts, and then the sound of horses' feet clattering quickly over the paved road were heard, and in a few minutes Algernon Grey was introduced into the chamber where the King and Queen were seated, surrounded by most of those who had accompanied them to the citadel.

"What are those shouts, my lord?" was Frederic's first question.

"I trust good auguries, your Majesty," replied the young Englishman; "the crowds surrounded me and my people as I returned, calling out loudly for the tidings I bore. I answered briefly that a truce was concluded to negotiate a peace. Those who understood German translated it to the rest, and then they tossed up their hats and shouted joyfully. So I trust that they will now return to their own homes; for they seemed in a sadly disturbed state. There my lord, the King, is the convention signed by the Elector and Buequoi. It was all that by any arguments I could obtain, though I disputed with them for an hour."

"But eight hours' suspension of arms!" exclaimed Frederic, looking at the paper, and then gazing at Christian of Anhalt, and at Thurm. Our decision must be made speedily."

"If we were but sure of Mansfeld," said Anhalt, thoughtfully, "and had but two thousand men more within the walls."

"It is vain, old friend," cried Count Thurm. "I know these people better than any one; and I take upon myself to say to the King—fly at once. Lose not the precious moments. There are traitors in town, and court, and army. The people are not with us; we have no force to hold out; no hope of succour. You have eight hours, my lord, to save yourself from worse than perhaps you dream of; and, what is far more, to save this dear lady, our Queen. Lose not an instant; but go."

"It were well, my royal friend," said Christian of Anhalt. "Had we the people with us; had we troops to secure the place without their aid; could we even rally the remains of the army within Prague, I would say, 'Stay; fight it out here to the last; and play the game to an end, however desperate.' But all things at this moment are against us. The only thing in our power is eight hours of time. I see naught to which they can be applied, but to your speedy escape. If you stay with an army of fifty thousand men at your gates, with a turbulent and discontented population within, with a force not sufficient to man the whole walls, with provisions that will not last ten days, and not ammunition enough to resist a regular siege, a thousand to one the population throw open the gates to-morrow, and deliver you as a prisoner into the hands of the enemy."

"That, too, with the ban of the empire hanging over your head," cried Count Thurm; "and two inveterate enemies ready to execute it."

"Let us go," cried Elizabeth, rising from the table. "It can never be said that I have been the advocate of weak counsels; but now, like the willow, our strength may lie in yielding."

Let us not hesitate any longer. In half an hour I shall be ready. We shall gain seven hours, at least, upon the enemy; and, surely, that will place us in security."

"Madam," said young Bertrand of Thurm, "by your good leave, you shall have some longer space. My lord the King has made me governor of this citadel. I have five hundred men in whom I can trust. With them I will undertake to hold it out for three full days against false Maximilian of Bavaria and his fifty thousand. This Jesuit-soldier shall find work enough beneath these walls to keep him for that time, at least, from pursuing the king-mas he has betrayed, and make him recollect, perhaps, the promises he has violated."

"Never!" cried Elizabeth, warmly, taking the young man's hand in hers; "I will have no such sacrifice. Never shall the son of our best friend hazard his life to cover my flight. Nor even would I expose this city, sickle as it has proved itself, to the outrage of a furious enemy for such a consideration as my poor safety. Rather let me perish at once, than be remembered as a curse."

Thus saying, she quitted the room, calling to her ladies to follow; and a scene of indescribable confusion succeeded, while hasty preparations were made for instant departure. Servants hurried hither and thither; carriages and horses were prepared in haste. What small supplies of money could be obtained, a few of the most necessary articles of apparel, some papers of great importance, some treasured memorials of days of happiness, and a small supply of ammunition for the men of the troop, were packed up with all speed; and a rapid consultation took place between Frederic and his principal advisers; as to the roads he should follow, and the course in which he should direct his flight. All agreed that Breslau was the place best fitted for his first pause, as it brought him near the dominions of friends and relations; and some one was eagerly sought amongst the attendants who could act as a guide to the fugitives through the desolate and inhospitable regions which they had to traverse on the way.

Algernon Grey, unable from his ignorance of the country to advise, and uncertain what part he might be called upon to play himself in this sad scene of flight and disaster, remained waiting the decision of others, till at length, a page entering called him to the presence of the Queen.

He found Elizabeth standing in a small room within, holding Agnes Herbert's hand in hers. There was no one else in the chamber; and a single candle afforded the only light, which showed him the pale countenances of his sovereign's daughter and her young companion.

"My lord," said Elizabeth quickly, as soon as he entered, "you promised to save and protect this dear girl. You will remember your promise, I am sure; and I must remember one I made to her uncle twelve long months ago. It was to the effect that; if by the chances of war I was obliged to quit Prague, I would send her back to him under safe escort. She would fain go with me now; but I must deny her wishes. You will doubtless be able to reach the Upper Palatinate in safety; there will be

no object in stopping you. The fierce pursuers will most likely be upon my path like hounds before to-morrow morning. In your charge, therefore, I will place her; to your honour as a gentleman, and your conscience as a Christian, I entrust her. She is pure and good, noble and true, worthy of the love of the highest in this or any other land, and worthy of reverence as spotless innocence can render woman. Stay not for ceremonious leave-takings; but farewell! You will find a horse prepared for her below; and God bless and protect you, as you protect her!"

"One moment, your Majesty," said Algernon Grey. "Some ten of my sturdy Englishmen have got into the town in safety. Each, I will answer for him, is ready to shed the last drop of his blood in your behalf. Each is well armed and mounted, and provided with gold to defray all his own expenses. You yourself give me another destination, and I will obey your commands; but let these men remain with you as a sort of body-guard. I will leave them under the command of young Hopeton, a gentleman of honourable family, and a friend's son. My page and one servant will be enough with us—indeed, we shall pass more easily with few than many. The rest of the men, when you are safe, can join me at Heidelberg, where, please God, I will yet serve your Majesty to the best of my power."

"Be it so," answered the Queen. "Now, farewell! And Heaven reward you, my lord, for all you have done for me and mine. Adieu, dearest Agnes, adieu!"

The Queen opened her arms as she spoke; and Agnes Herbert cast herself upon her bosom, and, for an instant, gave way to tears; but, at length, Elizabeth gently removed her, saying, "We have no time for long adieus, sweet cousin; we shall meet again, if it be God's will. There, my lord," and she placed Agnes's hand in his, looking at him steadfastly for a moment as she did so, and then raising her eyes to Heaven.

Algernon Grey understood the appeal, and saying in a low tone, "On my life! on my honour!" he led Agnes from the room; and without passing through the chamber where he had left Frederic, advanced to the top of the great staircase. There he paused for a moment; and, drawing Agnes's arm through his, looked down on her face tenderly, asking in a low voice, "Are you afraid, Agnes?" She raised her eyes, beaming through her tears: "Not in the least," she answered—"sorrowful, but not afraid."

When they reached the court-yard, it presented a strange wild scene; carriages, horses, men mounted and dismounted, were all gathered together by the light of a few torches; and some minutes elapsed before Algernon Grey could discover which was the horse that had been prepared for his fair companion. At length, however, a strong but light jennet was found, with a lady's saddle and a small leathern bag, or portmanteau, strapped upon the croup; a page held it, saying, that it had been got ready by the Queen's order; and, lifting the sweet girl lightly into the saddle, Algernon Grey mounted his own horse, bade the boy, Mill, who was waiting, follow, and rode out, turning towards the great gates of the citadel. There he found as-

sembled the men of his own band, who had escaped into Prague, after the slaughter on the Weissenberg; and, after speaking for some minutes to a fine-looking young man at their head, he bade his old servant, Tony, who was with them, mount and come after him; and then, riding through the streets, soon reached the gates of the old town, and began to descend into the lower part of Prague.

The city was now comparatively quiet. The news of an armistice, which he himself had given, had spread amongst the people, calming their fears and cooling their heated passions. Multitudes had retired to their own houses; others had gone to consult at the town-house as to their future conduct; and none but a few stragglers were seen here and there, as the young Englishman and his fair companion rode through the dark unlighted streets. A cold November wind was whistling amongst the tall houses; the sky was varying every moment, now showing a star or two, now loaded with heavy clouds; and every thing bore the same sad and cheerless aspect that was presented by the fate of the royal persons he had just left. Summer had passed away, and the long, cold, desolate winter was close at hand. A flaming sort of beacon, raised in an iron frame upon a pole, shed a broad glare over the open space before the guard-house of the inner gate, to which he directed his course; but no one was seen there but a sentry walking up and down; and Algernon Grey directed his servant to give the rein of the haggard-horse, which was led with them, to the page, and desire some one to open the gates. The warder, who came forth with one or two soldiers, seemed disposed to make some difficulties; but the young Englishman produced the pass which he had received some hours before when going to the Bavarian camp, and, with a surly and discontented air, the man unlocked the heavy gates and let him pass. The drawbridge was slowly lowered; and, after a careful examination from the wicket-tower, to see that no enemy was near, the warder of the night opened the outer gates and let the whole party go forth, murmuring something about—"The fewer mouths in Prague the better!"

All was darkness, except where upon the summit of the Weissenberg the light of a fire, here and there, marked the bivouac of an Imperial regiment occupying the position where the Bohemian army had been encamped the night before. Taking a narrow road to the right, though he knew not well whither it led, Algernon Grey rode on for some way through a sandy part of the ground, and then passed a small stream by a narrow bridge hardly wide enough for two horses to advance abreast. The moment after a broader glare of light was seen upon the left, and innumerable flames, flickering and flashing on the clouds of smoke rising from the wood fires, showed where the whole host of the enemy lay.

Algernon Grey laid his hand gently upon that of Agnes Herbert, saying in a low tone, "We are safe for the present, dear Agnes. On our journey we will be brother and sister. God send the time may come when we may call each other by dearer names!"

Those were the first words that had been

spoken, but they made Agnes's whole frame thrill; and the next moment, putting his horse into a quicker pace, Algernon Grey led the way onward to the dark woods that stretched out before them.

CHAPTER XXX.

"I FEAR there are storms in the sky, dear Agnes," said Algernon Grey, as the stars disappeared, and the heavy clouds rolled broad over the heavens. "How cold the night wind blows!—does it not chill you, dear sister?"

"No," she answered; "I am warmly clad; but the poor Queen!—I dread to think of such a journey for her! Happy it is, indeed, that all the royal children were sent away before!"

"Happy indeed!" answered her companion; "for their presence would have added terribly to all the sufferings and fears of such a time as this. The darkness of the night, however, like many another gloomy thing, may not be so evil as it seems. It will conceal their flight; for I much fear that Maximilian of Bavaria would hold himself justified in seizing and keeping prisoners both King and Queen, notwithstanding the armistice, if he discovered they had left Prague."

"He, surely, never would be so base!" cried Agnes, warmly.

"I know not," replied her lover; "policy is a base thing; and there never was an act so foul that some smooth excuse could not be found for its commission. He has been brought up, too, in a school where plausible pretences for evil deeds is one part of the training; and to hold Frederic in captivity, would be too great a temptation for a Jesuitical spirit to resist, I fear."

"Then I will thank the darkness," answered his fair companion, "if it be as black as that of Egypt."

"It may sorely impede us ourselves," replied Algernon Grey. "Do you remember, Agnes, that last time we wandered together through the greater part of the night? I never thought it would be our fate to do so again. But what a different evening was that!—preceded, it is true, by dangers and sorrows, but followed by many brighter days. Oh, may this be so too!"

"God grant it!" cried Agnes. "I recollect it well—can I ever forget it! Oh, no; it is one of those things that, painted on memory, like the frescoes of the Italian artists—in colours that mingle with the very structure of that which bears them,—can never perish but with memory itself! To me that day seems like the beginning of life—of a new life, it certainly was; for what varied scenes—what spirit-changing events, have I not gone through since then! How different has been every aspect of my fate! how altered all my thoughts and feelings, my hopes, and even my fears!"

"I, too, shall remember it for ever," answered Algernon Grey; "though my fate has not undergone such changes. On has it gone in the same course, tending, I trust, to happiness, but by a thorny path. Yet, with no sudden changes, men have fewer epochs in their lives than women, Agnes—at least, in ordinary circumstan-

ces; but still, for those who feel, though the current of external things may not be subject to such changes, yet, in the world of the heart, they find moments, too, marked out indelibly in the history of life. That night was one of them for me. Let us ride on somewhat faster, and I will tell you, Agnes, as much as will interest you of my past existence;—you must know it some time. Who can tell when opportunity may serve again?"

"Oh! not to-night, not to-night," answered Agnes, shrinking from new emotions on a day which had been so full of agitation. "I may be very weak, my friend; but I have already undergone so much within twelve hours that, if you would have me keep my courage up for other dangers which may be still before us, you will not tell me aught that can move me more just now. And how can I," she added, feeling that she was showing the feelings of her heart more clearly than woman ever likes to display them; "how can I hear anything, affecting sadly one who has saved, befriended, comforted, supported me, without being deeply moved! Another day, Algernon, when we have calmer thoughts."

"Well, be it so," answered her lover; "I only sought to speak of matters not very bright, lest Agnes Herbert should think, hereafter, I had willingly concealed aught from her that she had a right to know."

"I shall never think evil of you, Algernon," she answered, in a firm, quiet tone; "I could sooner doubt myself than you. Hark! do you not hear voices speaking—there, to the right?"

Algernon Grey listened, but all was still; and, somewhat quickening their pace, they rode on through the deep wood which then stretched along the bank of the Moldau. A few minutes after, the sky became lighter as the shadowy masses of vapour were borne away by the wind, and Algernon Grey said, in a low voice, "The moon is rising, I think. Darkness were our best friend, dear Agnes; but yet I trust we are now beyond all danger from the enemy. The wood seems coming to an end."

It was as he supposed; for, ere they had gone a quarter of a mile farther, the trees suddenly ceased, and they found themselves on a broad road by the side of the river. The moon was shining on the wide waters, rendering them one sheet of liquid silver; but a minute or two after they had emerged from the screen of branches, the horse of Algernon Grey swerved violently away from some object on the bank. He reined him round, and gazed towards the stream. There was a corpse lying on the bank, stripped already of arms and clothing; and a large dark body—what, it was not possible to discover—was seen floating rapidly down the stream. All was still and silent around, without a sound but the murmuring Moldau rushing between its banks, which there were low and flat; and it had a strange and horrible effect, as Algernon Grey gazed over the scene, to behold that naked corpse lying there in the bright moonlight, with the glistening river flowing by, and the dark towers of Prague, far up the stream, rising in its splendid basin of hills, vast and irregular, so that rock and town could hardly be distinguished from each other; while, on the other side of the river was still to be dis-

tinguished, though faint and indefinite, the glare of the Bavarian watchfires.

"There have been plunderers at work here already," said Algernon Grey, riding on; but Agnes had seen the same object which caught his sight, and she kept silence, covering her eyes with her hand.

The road then rose again a little, and then fell into a sort of wooded glen; and, as they were descending, a voice suddenly cried out, "Stand! who goes there!" and at the same moment an armed man, pike in hand, presented himself, while two or three others drew out from the bushes.

Agnes's heart sunk; but Algernon Grey answered, in a calm tone, "We are peaceable travellers, if we are not molested. But we will not be stopped."

He looked over his shoulders as he spoke, for he heard the galloping of a horse, and to his surprise he saw that while the boy Frill remained firm, and had already drawn his sword, his old and tried servant Tony was riding quickly away.

"Peaceable travellers!" said the man. "You ride late, and with casque and cuirass. Come up, my men; come up! We must make these peaceable travellers account for their doings to General Tilly."

Algernon Grey's eye ran over the ground around. There were but four men visible, and all seemed armed alike as pikemen. "Drop behind, Agnes," he said in a low tone; "they have no fire-arms. I and the boy have."

As he spoke, the nearest man advanced to lay his hand upon the horse's bridle. "Stand back!" cried the young Englishman in a stern tone, drawing a pistol from his saddle-bow, and levelling it. "Make way there!—you are mere marauders, that is clear, stripping the dead. I will stop for the bidding of none such."

The man recoiled a step or two; but then, after an instant's hesitation, he sprang forward, pushing his pike at the horse's point. The young Englishman's finger was pressed firmly and steadily upon the trigger, the hammer fell, a ringing report followed, and his assailant reeled and fell back upon the turf at once. "Now for another," cried Algernon Grey, in German; "which of you will be the next?" and at the same moment he drew a second pistol from the holster. "Have the other weapons at hand, Frill!" he continued, speaking to the page, but never withdrawing his eyes from the group before him. "Who is the next, I say?"

No one moved; but they still stood across the path, apparently speaking together in a low voice. It was evident to Algernon Grey that the enemy had no force to fall back upon, and that the party consisted merely of men sent across the river to cut off any stragglers from the Bohemian army, or else of the plunderers who always follow great hosts, and live too frequently by assassinating the wounded and stripping the dead. As they were still three to two, however, and the presence of Agnes Herbert filled him with apprehensions on her account which he had never known on his own, he was unwilling to hurry into any further strife, while there was a chance of the men retiring and leaving the way open. He therefore paused, ere he took upon himself the part of assailant,

holding the pistol already cocked in his hand, and prepared at once to repel any sudden attack. After a brief consultation amongst themselves, however, the men separated; one remained close to the road, merely drawing behind a tree to the side; the other two ran to the right and left amongst the bushes, evidently with the intention of springing out upon him and his party as he passed. The position was dangerous; but there seemed no choice. To retreat might throw them in the way of other and stronger parties of the same marauders. To parley with the adversary could produce no good result; and, choosing his course speedily, Algernon Grey turned his head to Agnes, saying, "Close up close to me, dear lady; you, boy, take your place by the lady's left, put up your sword, and advance slowly, pistol in hand; aim steadily and near, if any one attacks you, and still keep on."

Then, drawing his sword, he placed it between his teeth, and, holding the pistol in his right, advanced at a foot-pace as soon as Agnes had ridden up to his side.

It would seem that the adversaries were somewhat intimidated by his proceedings, for they did not make their attack at once, as he had expected; but the delay brought unexpected help, for, as the young Englishman, reining in his horse, was proceeding slowly along the road, he suddenly heard the galloping of a horse behind him, and, for an instant, feared that all was lost. He did not venture to turn his head, indeed, keeping a watchful eye in front, and on either side; but the boy Frill, less cautious, looked round by the light of the moon, and then exclaimed aloud,—

"Hurrah! Here comes friend Tony with help."

Either the sort of cheer he gave, or their own observation, showed the marauders that they were likely to be overmatched. The man behind the tree started away and ran down the road, receiving the ball of Algernon Grey's pistol as he went, falling, rising again, and staggering in amongst the bushes. The other two were heard pushing their way through the dry branches; but, ere they could have gone far, the old servant was by his master's side.

"I beg your pardon, my lord, for running away. I'm not accustomed to that trick; but I had heard English tongues, and caught a little glimpse of a fire, as we passed through the wood; and I thought I could serve you better in the rear than in the front."

"Who have you got with you?" asked Algernon Grey, looking round to the other men who had come up, one of whom, with his sword's point dropped, was gazing down upon the body of the man who had been shot, while two others had followed Tony close to the young gentleman's side, and a fourth seemed to be searching the brushwood on the right for any concealed enemy.

"They are four men from Master Digby's troop," answered Tony. "I could have sworn that the tongues I heard were English, so I had no fear in going back; and they may prove desperate good help to us as we proceed."

Algernon Grey paused to consider for a moment; and then, turning to the men, he asked them some questions, the answers to which

showed that after the last charge on the part of the Bohemian force, they had contrived to cross the Moldau, and concealed themselves in the wood. They had seen several bands of plunderers come over the river during the evening, and had lain quite still till it was dark, when they had lighted a fire, and sent one of their number to a neighbouring village for provisions. The store they had obtained had been scanty; but they were solacing themselves with this supply when Tony's apparition called them to the saddle; and, without hesitation or fear, they came down to aid a countryman in distress. They asked no better than to accompany the young Englishman and his party; but Algernon Grey, recollecting that Digby's troop had suffered but little, and that Brandeis had been appointed as a rallying place, would only suffer them to accompany him three or four miles farther down the river; and then, paying them liberally for their escort, directed them to the best of his knowledge, on their road to the point of rendezvous.

A little village lay immediately before him, when he parted with his new companions; but it was all dark and solitary; and, though the clouds had gathered thickly over the sky, and the north-east wind was blowing keen, he asked Agnes if she could still proceed; and, on her answering in the affirmative, rode on along the broad and even road, catching, from time to time, a glimpse of the glistening Moldau on the left, though at a much greater distance than before.

"If I recollect right, dear Agnes," he said, "some six or seven miles ahead is the small town of Weltrus, where there is a passage-boat across the river. We can discover there whether there is any danger on the road on the other side; and, if not, can get across; and, placing ourselves in the enemy's rear, after which we shall have no difficulty in reaching Waldeckhausen, where we shall be in a friendly country, and make our way through the Upper Palatinate to Heilbrunn and Heidelberg."

Agnes agreed to all that he proposed; but the distance was somewhat greater than he had imagined. His own horse showed great symptoms of fatigue. It became necessary to proceed more slowly as they advanced; and the church clock struck three as they entered the narrow street. All was dark and silent as they advanced, till, when they were about midway through the little town, they heard the watchman of the night, as was then common in almost every village in Germany, and is still practised in remote places, knocking at the doors of the principal houses, and waking the drowsy inhabitants, to assure them that "all is right."

With the aid of this functionary, the landlord of the little Guest-house was brought to the door, and rooms speedily prepared for the travellers to repose. He would fain, to say the truth, have put them all into one chamber; for the manners of that part of the country were somewhat rude in their simplicity; and the good man could not at all understand the delicacy of a more refined state. All, however, was arranged at length; and Agnes lay down to repose. Her lover occupied a chamber near; and his two attendants were placed on a pallet across the lady's door.

It was evident, from the quiet manner of the host, that no tidings had yet reached him of the rout of Prague; but Algernon Grey was anxious to depart before the rumour spread through the country, and, with the first ray of morning light, he was on foot. From the boatmen at the ferry he found that the only intelligence they had yet received from the scene of war was nearly four days old. Men spoke of the combat of Rakonitz as the last event, and, satisfied that, on the way before him, there would be found none but the ordinary dangers which awaited all travellers in those days, he returned and roused Agnes from the deep slumber into which she had fallen.

In a few minutes she was by his side, saying, "How strange a thing is sleep, Algernon! I had forgot all, and, in the only dream I had, I was a child again, in the happy valley by the banks of the Moselle."

Algernon Grey smiled sadly. "Sometimes I hardly know," he said, "which is the dream, which the reality: the vivid images of sleep, or those that pass before our waking eyes. Perhaps a time may come when we shall wake to truer things, and find that this life and all that it presents was but a vision."

"No," said his fair companion, after a moment's thought; "there are some things that must be real. The strong affections that go down with us to death; good actions, and, alas! evil ones, likewise. But I am ready; let us set out again."

But Algernon Grey would not suffer her to encounter renewed fatigue without some refreshment, and after a light meal, already ordered, they passed across the river in the ferry-boat.

"Great news! great news!" cried a stranger, riding up to cross over from the other side, just as they were remounting their horses after landing. "The good Duke of Bavaria and General Buoquoi have defeated the heretic Elector Palatine under the walls of Prague, and taken him and his English wife prisoner!"

"Are you sure of the intelligence?" asked Algernon Grey, gravely.

"Quite," said the horseman, sharply; "do you doubt it, young gentleman?"

"Nay, wait till you get to the other side of the water, and then inquire farther," answered Algernon; "there is many a battle reported won, that is really lost. Good-day," and he rode on with Agnes, leaving the traveller in some doubt and consternation.

"We must lose no time, dear Agnes," he said; "but hasten on into the rear of the enemy's army ere this news spreads far. If we can reach Laun, I think we may escape suspicion as fugitives from Prague, and there are still some garrisons in that quarter which have not yet submitted to the Austrians."

But, as usual in all calculations of distances, the state of the roads was not calculated upon. The day proved lowering and gloomy, the wind blew in sharp fierce gusts over the bare hilly ground between the Moldau and the Eger, and though the distance from the one point to the other is not thirty miles in a direct line, the sinuosities of an ill-made country road rendered it nearly double. At length as night was falling, Algernon Grey lifted his fair weary com-

panion from her horse at the door of a small village inn, somewhat to the west of Teinitz, and gladly sat down with her by the fireside of the good widow hostess, who with her daughter were the only occupants of the house. The fare was scanty and simple, but there was a cheerful good humour in the manner with which it was served which rendered it palatable; and the inhabitants of a remote place, with neither fortress nor castle in the neighbourhood, seemed to know and care little about the war which had passed with its rude current at a distance from them. The woman, too, could speak German, and after having provided the weary travellers with all that her house could afford in the way of food, she threw her gray hood over her head, saying, with a cheerful laugh to Agnes, "I am going out to search the village for eggs, and fowls, and meat; for it will snow before morning; and then we may not be able to get them."

Agnes gazed in Algernon's face with a look of apprehension; but he smiled gaily, replying to her look: "Let it snow if it will, dear Agnes. We shall then have an icy fortress for our defence, which no enemy will be in haste to pass. It will give us time for rest, and thought, and preparation."

The woman's prophecy was found true, for the next morning at daybreak the ground was covered with several feet of snow, and for three days the roads in the neighbourhood were impassable. They seemed to fly very quickly, however, to Agnes Herbert and Algernon Grey, though she felt her situation strange. But her companion's gentle kindness deprived it of any painful feeling: the rich stores of his mind were all poured forth to cheer and to amuse her, and if they loved before the hour of their arrival there, oh how they loved when, on the fourth morning, they again set forth from the poor but comfortable shelter they had found!

The day was bright, and almost as warm as summer, they and their horses, too, were refreshed and cheered, and a long day's journey brought them close to the frontiers of the Upper Palatinate.

Avoiding all large cities, they again rested for the night in a small town; and on the following day gladly passed the limits of Bohemia, never to return. The rest of their journey was performed without difficulty, though not without fatigue, remembered dangers made present security seem more sweet, the weather continued clear and fine, and they wandered for six days through mountains, and valleys, and woods, almost as happily as if in the first spring of young love they had gone forth together to view all that is fair and bright in the beautiful book of nature.

CHAPTER XXXI

"EVIL news, Obertraut, evil news!" cried Colonel Herbert, as he sat in his tower at Heidelberg, with an open letter in his hand. "Anhalt has been defeated under the walls of Prague—totally defeated! How could it be otherwise! Fifty thousand trained Austrians and Bavarians against thirty-five thousand raw recruits—a mere mob of herds and citizens, and wild Transylvanian horse!"

"What more?" asked Obertraut, who stood before him with a stern but calm brow. "There must be other news at the back of that; and if you have not yet got it, few days will pass ere it comes."

"There is plenty more," said Herbert, sadly; "Frederic, the Queen, and all the court fled, no one knows whither, and Prague surrendered on the following day."

"I thought so," answered Obertraut, without any change of tone; "one could see it coming as plain as the Neckar from the bridge. But who is the letter from—your niece? Where is she?—How fares she?"

"I know not," answered the old officer, laying the paper down upon the table and clasping his hands together.

"The letter is from Lodun—but he says no word of Agnes—God help us! But I will not be apprehensive; where her royal mistress could pass, she could pass too. Besides, even if she remained in Prague, these men would never hurt a woman."

"I do not know," replied Obertraut, with a very gloomy brow. "Tilly is not tender, and such as he have done strange things in the Palatinate lately, as witness Bensheim, Hippartheim, and Otterberg. Herbert, I love your niece too well to rest satisfied so. I must have further news, and I go to seek it."

Herbert rose and grasped his hand, gazing sadly in his face. "Alas! Obertraut," he said, after a moment's silence, "I fear you are preparing disappointment for yourself. Woman's heart is a wayward thing."

Obertraut waved his hand. "You mistake me, my friend," he said. "Any disappointment that could be felt has been drunk to the dregs already. Agnes loves me not, as I should require to be loved; and I seek no heart that cannot be entirely mine. I have had my lesson, and have learned it well. I love her still, but with a different love to that of former times; cold, but not less strong; and in return she shall give me esteem and regard. This she cannot refuse, for it depends upon myself, not her—but let us talk of other things. I will have news of her, ere many days be over. I cannot leave my post, 'tis true; nor can you quit yours; but still, neither of us can rest satisfied without some tidings of her fate—you have no indication of which way her steps are turned!—None of where the Queen has gone to!"

"None," answered Herbert. "Lodun says naught that can give the slightest clew. He feared, it would seem, that his letter might fall into the enemy's hands, and wrote most guardedly in consequence. Yet stay, I recollect that when she left me, the Queen made a solemn promise to send her back hither, if by the chances of war Frederic's court should be driven out of Prague—nor is she one to forget such a promise."

"Hither!" said Obertraut; "it is an unsafe place of refuge. Here, with war at our very gates; Heidelberg itself menaced daily; weak, vacillating princes, ruining the noblest cause and the finest army ever men had; the Spanish army daily gaining ground against us; and the whole valley of the Rhine a prey to a foreign enemy. But it cannot be helped. Even now,

most likely, she is on the road; and we must try to shield her from peril, when she comes into the midst of this scene of carnage."

As he spoke a heavy step was heard upon the stairs; and an armed man thrust his head into the room, saying, "The town is in a strange state, Colonel; for the news has driven the people out of their wits with fear."

"What do the fools expect?" exclaimed Obertraut; "that Maximilian will march hither or direct?"

The man shook his head, as if he did not understand him; and Herbert interposed, inquiring, "What news, Ancient?"

"Why, that Spinola has taken Weinheim, and is marching hither," replied the soldier. "Professors and half the students are flying to Neckargemuend; and all the rich citizens are frightening each other with long faces in the market-place; while the women are in the churches, praying as hard as they can pray."

"This must be seen to," said the Baron of Obertraut. "You go and quiet the people, and prepare for defence. I will ride out with my troop, and see what truth there is in these tidings."

"I love not to meddle," said Herbert, "for I vowed I would have no command when Mervin was put over my head here. But still, I suppose, I must do my best; and, when the hour for fighting comes, they will find that I am young and active enough to defend the place, if not to command the garrison."

"Nay, nay, cast away jealousies," said Obertraut; "do I not serve under mere boys when the time requires it?"

"Ay, you are mightily changed, my friend," said Herbert.

"I thank God for it," answered Obertraut; "I have lost naught that was good to keep, and much that was better cast away. But minutes are precious: let us forth. I think the folks will fight when the time of need comes; for these citizens are often more frightened at a distant rumour than a present peril."

"Let those that will, fly," answered Herbert, casting his sword-belt over his shoulder, and putting on his hat. "If we are to have a siege, the fewer mouths and the fewer cowards the better."

The town of Heidelberg presented a strange scene, as the two officers passed through the streets; after descending, by the shortest path, from the castle. Consternation was at its height; and the only preparations to be seen were for flight, not for defence. Men on horseback and on foot—women in carts, many with children in their arms—waggons loaded with goods, and every sort of conveyance that could be found in haste, well nigh blocked up the way leading to the eastern gate of the town, now called the Karl-thor; and in all the market-places and open spaces of the city, crowds of burghers were to be seen; some of them bold, indeed, in words, but almost all of them filled with terror, and meditating future flight.

Herbert mingled with the different groups, amidst a population where he was well known, asking, in a calm and somewhat scornful tone, "Why, what are you afraid of, good people?" and generally adding, "There is no danger, I

tell you, if you have but a little spirit. First, the news is not true, I believe; and, secondly, Spinola has not half men enough to take Heidelberg, if but the schoolboys and parish-beadles will please to hold the gates against him. Come, come; go home and rest quiet. Six months hence it may be a different matter; but now you have no cause for fear."

In many instances, his words, but, more still, his calm tone and easy bearing, had their effect in re-assuring the people. They began to be ashamed of their fears; and a number of the principal townsmen returned to their homes to tell their wives and families that the danger had been magnified; and as no farther report of Spinola's approach reached the town during the day, towards evening Heidelberg became far more tranquil, though it must be admitted that the population was considerably thinned between morning and night.

In the mean while, Obertraut issued forth by the Maunheim-gate at the head of a party of about two hundred horse, and advanced rapidly into the plain. No enemy could be discovered for some time; but at length the young commander saw the smoke of a burning mill at some distance, and concluded thence that Spinola, after sacking Weinheim, had retired, making a mere demonstration on the city of Heidelberg, more for the purpose of striking the inhabitants with terror than with any intention of attacking a place too strong for his small force. Shortly after, from a small rise, the rear guard of his army could be discovered marching towards Ladenburg; but, at the same time, several large parties of Spanish horse were to be seen on the south side of the Neckar, and two or three cornets could be perceived going at a quick pace along the mountain-road towards Wiesloch.

"On my life! they are somewhat bold," said Obertraut to himself. "Whither are they going now, I wonder! We must see."

He paused for several minutes, watching; then called up to his side one of the young officers of his troop, and gave him orders to proceed with fifty men on the road towards Mosbach, to inquire eagerly for all news from Prague, and if he met with any of the ladies of Elizabeth's court returning towards Heidelberg, to give them safe escort back. Three single horsemen he despatched on separate roads. The reader who knows the Palatinate will remember that, passing through the woods and orchards, there are innumerable small bridle-paths and cart-tracks, to watch the movements of the party which had been seen advancing towards Wiesloch; and then, advancing slowly amongst the trees, so as to conceal his force as far as possible, he did not halt till he reached the village of Hockenheim, whence he threw a small party into Waldorf. Night fell shortly afterwards; and Obertraut was seated at his frugal supper, when one of his men returned in haste to tell him that the Spanish horse had passed by Wiesloch, and just at nightfall attacked Langenbrücken.

"They had got possession of one part of the town, I think, ere I came away; but the people had barricaded the bridge, and seemed resolved to hold out on the other part."

"We must give them help," said Obern-

traut. "How many of the Spaniards were there?"

"One of the men I found half drunk upon the road," said the soldier, "told me that there were Jeronimo Valetto's troop and another; in all near three hundred men."

"Well, we are a hundred and fifty," answered Obertraut. "Go down, call the men to the saddle—but no trumpets, remember; we will do all quietly;" and, as soon as the soldier was gone, he filled himself a large horn-cup full of wine and drank it off; then placing his helmet on his head again, and tightening the buckle of his cuirass, he issued forth, and in five minutes more was in the saddle.

Advancing quietly and silently by the paths through the plain, which he well knew, he approached Langenbröcken, fancying at one time he heard a firing in that direction. As he came nearer, however, all was still; and neither sight nor sound gave any indication of strife in the long straggling village. At the distance of a quarter of a mile the young baron rode on with four or five men in advance of his troop; and, shortly after, heard several voices laughing, talking, and singing. They were not German tongues; though the language that they spoke was more harmonious than his own, it did not sound sweet to Obertraut's ear. Dismounting in profound silence, he advanced with four of his men on foot, till he came in sight of a fire at the end of the narrow street, where three Italian soldiers were sitting, whiling away the time of their watch with drink and song; and, approaching as near as he could without being seen, Obertraut whispered a word to his followers, and then darted forward upon the little party of the enemy. He had one down and under his feet in a moment; the others started up, but were instantly grappled with by the German reiters and mastered at once. One of them, indeed, levelled a carbine at Obertraut and was about to fire; but a stout, tall German thrust his hand over the pan just in time to stop a report which would have alarmed the town.

"The least noise and you are a dead man," said Obertraut, in as good Spanish as he could command. "Where is Valetto?"

"Who are you?" demanded the man to whom he spoke.

"I am he whom you call 'that devil Obertraut,'" answered the young baron; "so give me an answer quickly, or I'll drive my dagger down your throat."

"He is in that house there, where the sign swings," answered the man sullenly, pointing up the street.

"And the rest of the men?" asked the Colonel.

"Oh, in the different houses, where you will see lights and hear tongues," answered the Italian soldier in bad Spanish; and looking over his shoulder at the same time, he saw the young baron's troop advancing quietly over the dusty road into the town.

"Let fifteen or twenty dismount and come with me," said Obertraut in a low voice; "the rest search all the houses where there are lights; but let a party be at each door before the least noise is made; then out down

the enemy wherever you find them. Give these men their lives, but guard them well."

Thus saying, he advanced, with the party he had commanded to follow him, at a rapid pace towards the house which the Italian had pointed out as his officer's quarters. There was a little step before the door; and, as Obertraut put his foot upon it, he heard voices speaking in the room to the left. One was that of a man, loud, boisterous, and jovial. The other a woman's tongue, soft and sweet, but speaking in the tone of lamentation and entreaty. Something in that voice made the young baron's heart thrill; and, cocking the pistol in his hand, he pushed open the outer door, turned suddenly to the left, and entered the room whence the sounds proceeded. Before him, seated at a table with viands and wine, was a stout tall man with a face inflamed with drink; while, a little in advance, held by the arm by a rough soldier, was the never-to-be-forgotten form of Agnes Herbert. Her face was drowned in tears; her limbs seemed scarcely to have strength to hold her up; and yet her eye flashed as she said, "You are cruel, ungenerous, discourteous!"

Valetto started suddenly up from his seat as he beheld Obertraut's face; and the soldier, who held Agnes, turned fiercely round and was drawing his sword. But the young baron's pistol was at his head in a moment; the hammer fell, and he rolled dead upon the floor.

Agnes sprang forward to Obertraut's aid; and Valetto sank down into his seat again as pale as death, for the heads of five or six German troopers were seen behind their leader, and the sounds of contention, fierce but short-pistols fired, clashing swords, groans and oaths in Spanish, Italian, and German—were heard from other parts of the house.

"Take that man, and tie him!" said the young baron, speaking to his soldiers. "Two will be enough. The rest go and still that noise! I will come after. Fear not, fear not, lady! The town is in my hands—you are now quite safe. Here, sit you down for an instant, and I will rejoin you speedily." As he spoke, he led Agnes gently to a seat, and was then turning away to leave her, when she exclaimed, "Oh! my kind friend—there is—there is—one who needs aid in that room behind, if they have not murdered him. We were on our way to Heidelberg, when—"

"I will return directly," said Obertraut, as the sound of another pistol was heard, "fear not—all shall be done that you can desire."

Thus saying, he left her; and Agnes, sitting down, covered her eyes with her hands and wept.

In the mean time the two German soldiers had tied Valetto's arms, and he sat gazing upon the fair girl he had been grossly insulting the moment before, with a look of anxious hesitation.

"Speak to him for me, lady," he said, at length, in Italian, "that incarnate devil will put me to death, if you do not. I know his face too well."

"What do you deserve?" asked Agnes Herbert, raising her eyes for a moment, with a look of reproach; "not for what you have said to me, for that I can forgive, though it was base

and cowardly, but for what you have done to those who defended me, and only did their duty to the Prince they serve."

"What is it he has done?" cried Obertraut, who had overheard the last words as he returned to the room.

"Master Algernon Grey," answered Agnes, with the colour mounting in her pale cheek again, "escorted me hither from Prague, by the Queen's commands. He sided the people to defend the town, and was brought in badly wounded. They tore me away from him when I would have staunched the blood; and I heard that man order him to be put to death."

"Take him out to the door," said Obertraut, "and hang him to the sign-pole."

"I did but jest! I did but jest!" cried Valetto, who had learned some German, "the cavalier is safe—you will find him living—I know—believe he is living—if he died not of his wounds—I did but jest—the soldiers know it."

"Nay, nay,—I beseech you," said Agnes, in a tremulous voice, laying her hand upon Obertraut's arm, "I do not seek revenge—I ought not—must not feel it—oh, spare him!"

"If our noble friend is alive, well," answered Obertraut, sternly; "but if he be dead, I will avenge him, whatever you may do, lady,—the act shall be mine,—come show me where he was;—and you, my friend, make your peace with Heaven, as far as may be, and as soon; for, if I find him not in life, your time on earth will not be more than five minutes. Come, dear lady, where was our friend when last you saw him? I trust this man's words are true; for no soldier would venture to put a prisoner to death, unless by his commander's orders."

"Come," said Agnes, "this way," and she led him through the door.

There was a man lying across the passage, with a ghastly wound on his left temple, and the blood weltering forth over the scorched and smoke-blackened skin, forming a small pool in the inequalities of the earthen floor. The lady recoiled for an instant from that fearful object; but the life of Algernon Grey was at stake; and, summoning all her resolution, she stepped over the corpse, and pursued her path towards the back part of the house.

It seemed that the German soldiers had not penetrated there; and it is probable that many of Valetto's men had made their escape already by the little garden at the back, the door of which stood open; but some few steps she reached it, the fair girl paused and laid her hand upon the lock, hesitating with that terrible contention of hope and fear, from which the human bosom is seldom free, either in one shape or another. She might the next moment see him she loved lying a corpse before her eyes; she might find the greater part of her apprehensions vain; but yet fear had the predominance, and it required a great effort of resolution to make her open the door and look in. There was a light in the room; and the moment a step was heard, Algernon Grey turned quickly on the bed where he was laid in the clothes which he had worn on his journey; looking round with a faint smile, and saying in a low and feeble voice, "I am better, dear Agnes—the bleeding has stopped—what has that man done?—what was all that noise?"

Had the whole world been present, Agnes Herbert could not have resisted the feelings of her heart; and, advancing to the bed-side, she dropped upon her knees, resting her hands on his, and exclaimed, "Thank God!—oh, thank God!"

"Ah, Obertraut, too;" said Algernon Grey, "then I need not ask what those pistol-shots implied. Welcome, my good friend, welcome."

"Hush!" said Obertraut, gravely, holding up his hand. "The doctors made me keep silence when I was wounded, and so will I with you. Are you sure that the wounds have stopped bleeding? Come, let me see;" and advancing close to the young Englishman's side, he drew back his vest and the neck of his shirt, which were already stiff with blood, and saw a large wound on the right breast, and another, apparently from a pistol-shot, just below the bend of the shoulder.

"Is this all?" he asked, in a cheerful tone.

"Methinks these won't kill you, my good friend."

"There is another just below the knee," replied Algernon Grey; "but that is nothing."

"Let me see," said Obertraut; "let me see;" and he proceeded to examine.

"It is not much," he said carelessly; "but still, this is bleeding and must be stopped; and we must take care that the others do not break out again. I wonder if there is such a thing as a leech in the place—there must be a barber, and we will send for him. Barbers never fly, for enemies must have their beards dressed as well as friends. Stay with him, dear lady, stay with him, and do something, if you can, to stop this blood. I will send some one who knows more of such matters than I do; my trade is more to shed blood than to staunch it."

He staid to say no more, but hurried out; gave some hasty orders to the soldiers in the house, went further down the street, looked into several houses where there were lights within and horses at the door, and, having satisfied himself that all resistance was over in the place, he inquired of a countryman, whom he found in one of the rooms, where the barber of the village was to be found.

"Oh, a long way farther up," said the man; "you will see the pole and basin out," and, calling two or three of his troopers to follow him, Obertraut strode away, giving various orders for the security of his men as he went.

The trade of the barber and the profession of the surgeon were then very strangely combined together throughout the world, with the exception of one or two cities in one or two kingdoms, in which the chirurgéon was acknowledged as belonging to a higher and more honourable class than the mere trimmer of men's beards and the shaver of their cheeks. In every country town, however, the latter exercised the craft of bone-setting and wound-dressing, and the learned functionary of Langenbrücken was not at all surprised at being called upon by the Baron of Obertraut to tend a wounded man.

"You have nothing to do," said the Baron, in a commanding tone, "but to stop the bleeding, and to make sure that it does not break out again as we go to Heidelberg. This case is above your skill, my friend, so that I want you to do naught more than I have said; no vulnerary salves and sympathetic ointments, if

you please; and, if I find you meddling beyond your craft, I will slit your ears."

"But how is the gentleman hurt?" asked the barber; "let me know that, at least, that I may bring what is needful."

"How is he hurt?" exclaimed Oberntraut, "what a question is that! First, he is very badly hurt, and I doubt he will not recover, so I don't want you to make it sure. Then he is hurt with sword-thrusts and pistol-balls. All you have to do is to bind up his wounds. Therefore come along at once;" and, leading him down to the door of the house where Algernon Grey lay, he then went on to ascertain the number of prisoners that had been made, and of the dead and wounded on both parts.

When the barber entered the room to which Agnes had conducted Oberntraut, he found her still kneeling by her lover's bed-side, and with her hand clasped in his; but the wound, from which the blood had been flowing when the young Baron left them, was now tightly bound up with a scarf, so that but a few drops trickled through, staining the bandage slightly. The lady withdrew her hand as soon as the door opened, and the barber proceeded to his examination, and, being not without skill, from long experience, to which science is but a hand-maid, he did what was really best at the moment in all respects but one. His look and his words certainly did not tend to reassure the wounded man, for, with a fault very ordinary in his calling, he was inclined to make the worst of any case presented to him, for the sake of some little additional reputation if recovery took place, and of security if a fatal result occurred.

Poor Agnes's heart sank at the doubtful shake of the head, and the still more alarming words, "A very bad wound indeed—I wonder where the point of the weapon went;" and not even the cheerful tone of Oberntraut, when he returned, could dispel her apprehensions.

"There, get you gone, sorrow-face," said the Baron, addressing the barber. "There's a crown for you. Your diabolical looks are enough to push a sick man into the grave, were he a mile off it. Well, my good friend," he continued, speaking to Algernon Grey, "you will be upon your feet as soon as I was, I dare say. We must get you to Heidelberg to-night, however, for this is an open place and without defence. You shall have a little wine before you go to keep you up, and I have told the men to make some sort of litter to carry you—there, do not speak; they told me that speaking was the worst of all things. I will answer all your questions, without your asking. I found a man and a boy in one of the houses hard by; the man shot through the leg, just like yourself, and the boy with a wound through his cheek and two or three grinders lost; but they'll do very well, and can ride as far as need be. Did you come in a carriage, or on horseback, dear lady? I can find no carriage in the place, but horses enough to mount a regiment."

"On horseback," answered Agnes. "We had no time for carriages in quitting Prague."

"Ay, ay! a sad affair, that!" said the young Baron. "But tell me, what has become of the King and Queen, for here we are all in darkness."

Agnes gave him a short account of all that had taken place up to the time of her quitting Prague, under some embarrassment, indeed, for the keen eye of the young Baron of Oberntraut was fixed upon her countenance during the whole time, not rudely, but firmly. Shortly after her account was concluded, and before he could ask any more questions, one of the men came in to say that all was ready, and that the boy had pointed out the lady's horse. Some wine was then procured, and Oberntraut insisted not only that Algernon Grey should take some, but that Agnes should partake, passing the cup from the one to the other with a meaning smile, not without some share of sadness in it. The hastily constructed litter was then brought in, and the wounded man placed upon it and carried out. At the door of the little bolstery a number of the villagers had gathered together on the report of the enemy's discomfiture, and Oberntraut addressed them in one of his blunt short speeches, saying, "I have a great mind to burn your town, you knaves, to punish you for not defending it better; but look well to the wounded, and I will forgive you. Keep a shrewd watch over the foreigners, and send them in to Heidelberg as they get better. I have left only one of my men with you, and if you do not treat him well I will skin you alive. There, bring the prisoners along;" and, placing Agnes on her horse, he mounted himself and rode away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE long and weary hours of sickness fell heavy upon Algernon Grey. Never for a day during the course of life had he known the weight of illness before, at least within his own remembrance. Powerful in frame, and vigorous in constitution, moderate in habits, and inured to robust exercises from early youth, life had been hitherto all light activity; and if some sorrows and cares had touched him, they had not had power in any way to affect his corporeal frame. The aching head, the dim and dazzled eye, the fainting heart, the weary and powerless limbs of the sickly or the over-studious, he had never known. It had only been with him hitherto to will and to do; the body had been no clog upon the mind; and the active energies of both had seemed to give fresh strength and vigour to each other.

Now, day after day, and week after week, he lay upon a sick couch in the castle of Heidelberg. Feeble, languid, full of pain, with every movement uneasy, with broken sleep at night, and drowsy heaviness by day, his cheek and his eyes dull, he lingered on under the unskilful hands of ignorant surgeons, who, with the wild phantasies of the time, only prolonged the period of sickness by the means which they employed to cure the wounds he had received.

All that could comfort or could soothe was done indeed by those around him, to alleviate his sufferings, and to make the heavy time pass lightly. Herbert was with him long every day; and Agnes, too, with a maid to bear her company, sat many an hour beside him. She read to him the books he loved, she sang to him the songs which she thought might waken hope

and banish despondency; she conversed in gentle yet cheerful tones, and the sweet sound of her musical voice was the only medicine he received that seemed at all to advance his cure.

There was no opposition to her wishes. She came, she went, when she would; and yet not one word had passed between her and Colonel Herbert on her position with regard to Algernon Grey. He seemed to comprehend it all; to see that they loved mutually and truly; to know that to withhold her presence from him would be to destroy him; that to refuse her the solace of tending him would wring the gentle heart which it was the thought and business of his life to render happy. He was a man of a peculiar character too, not singular—though I had nearly used that word—for there are many such in the world; he was doubtful and careful at first, perhaps somewhat suspicious, but his confidence once gained it was unbounded; and no thought of cold proprieties, no question of what the world would say, ever shackled the free energies of any generous impulse. He had met himself free, years before, from all the trammels of convention; he had seen another do so from love for him. It had produced, though it so seldom does so, perfect happiness to both; and he perceived no reason why, between two beings pure and high, and honest in mind, the same conduct should not effect the same result. It might have been a fatal error had he mistaken the character of either, even in the slightest point. But there were other causes for his calm acquiescence in all that Agnes wished. Up to the hour at which she left him for Prague, he had watched her from infancy with fond care and anxiety; all her actions had been under his own eye; her very heart and soul had seemed open to his view; and he had given to her mind in many things the bent of his own. Though he loved the free, wild spirit that animated her at times, he had directed, he had counselled her; but now, for more than a year she had acted entirely for herself. He had accustomed himself completely, in thought, to look upon her as independent of his advice and control; and in none of her letters had he found one word to make him wish that his guidance was still extended over her. She had been alone, too, with Algernon Grey in troublous times and difficult circumstances, for many a long day; she had assured him, that, during that time, no brother could have treated her with more kindness and consideration; and he knew that Agnes would not say that, if there was one dark spot in all the memory of their intercourse. Love, he saw, it was too late to guard against; and for all the rest, he had the fullest confidence.

But there was another who also, from time to time, visited with kindly feeling the chamber of the sick man. The young Baron of Obertraut came, whenever he set foot in Heidelberg, to see his former adversary. He conversed cheerfully, and yet considerately with him; he told him tales of all those wild and daring exploits which he himself and his gallant band performed by day and night against the enemy, who were now overrunning the Palatinate in every direction—exploits with which the pages of the old chronicles glow; for, if ever there

was a name which, for devotion, gallantry, unceasing activity, and brilliant success with small means, deserves to be placed upon the roll of heroes, it is that of John of Obertraut. But of the sad reverses which the forces of the Protestant princes met with, in consequence of the weakness, indecision, and discord of their leaders, Obertraut spoke not; for he well knew, that to depress the spirits of his hearer, would be to frustrate every means employed for his cure.

Yet at times he would gaze at him, as he lay with pale cheek, dim eye, and bloodless lip; and a look of thoughtful, sad, and intense speculation would come into the gallant soldier's face. What was it that he pondered? What was it that he calculated? Heaven knows. I cannot tell; then, generally, he would turn away hastily, and bidding his companion adieu, leave the room.

It was one day, after a fit of this sort of dreamy meditation, that going down to the Altan to gaze into the plain of the Rhine, he found Agnes breathing the free air, for a short space, before she resumed her post in her lover's sick chamber. She spoke with him kindly and frankly for a moment; and he talked to her with a thoughtful and abstracted air; but very few words had passed, ere she bade him adieu, and turned to go.

"Stay, Agnes, stay," he cried, "I want to speak with you."

She turned, with her cheek somewhat paler, and a degree of alarm in her look, which she could not hide; for now that she knew more of love, she was well aware that Obertraut had loved her; and she feared that he might love her still.

"You avoid me, Agnes," he said; "nay, hear me—I see it well—or, if you do not avoid me, you feel a restraint, an apprehension, when I am near you. There is but one means of banishing this; and, for both our sakes it must be banished; that must be by a frank explanation on my part. There was a time when I loved you more than life—when I hoped I might be loved in return; and then, with rash vanity and eager passion, I would have taken the life of any man who attempted to cross my course. Come, sit you down here, dear Agnes; for you tremble needlessly; and, when you have heard me to the end, you will never fear me, or shun me again. I tell you what has been, not what is. I saw you meet another; I saw your hearts and spirits instantly spring towards each other; I saw your eyes mutually light up with the same flame; why colour so, sweet lady? It is true, and natural, and just. I was half mad; I did him wrong; I sought his life; I placed him in a situation of danger, difficulty, and, it might have been, dishonour. I was vanquished, surpassed, and frustrated. From that hour I knew you never could be mine; I felt I must have lost much of your esteem, and that I had never possessed your love. I resolved that I would regain your respect, at least; ay, and your friendship. Weakened, tamed down, and softened, I spent the hours of sickness in arguing with my own heart, and conquering my own spirit; and in this combat, at least, I was successful. I cast the thought of love away from me; I made up my mind to the fact, that you

were to be his. I could not deny to myself that he had acted generously by me; and I resolved that I would return it by my very best endeavours. I knew, at length, that he who lies ill up there had rendered me the best service; and with a terrible struggle, but still a successful one, I cast jealousy, and anger, and mortified vanity, and irritated pride away, resolving that he should be my friend, and I would be his. So much for what is between him and me, Agnes; now for our part of it. I loved you passionately then. I love you calmly, coolly now, as a brother, Agnes—as a friend; not only no longer with hope, but no longer with passion. There is yet a remnant of pride in my nature, but this pride has turned to good and not to evil; for it has taught me to read myself, and study myself. I know that I could never be satisfied with aught but the first fresh affection of a free and untouched heart; that I should be jealous of every thought—ay, even of every remembrance—of the dead, even as well as of the living; that from the woman who consented to be mine, I should require the whole affections of her nature, from the first to the last. I would not have in the whole past one spot upon which her memory could rest with regret. I would be her happiness; and she should not have ever dreamed of other love but mine. In one word, then, Agnes, if he who possesses your love, and I do believe deserves it, were to sink under the wounds he has received—which God forbid!—this hand, once so coveted, should never be sought by me. I tell you so, to set your mind at rest, that we may be all that we ever can be to each other—true friends. Shrink not from me henceforth—dread not my presence or words. Look upon John of Oberntraut as your brother, if you will; and, at all events, believe that naught which a brother's love could do for a sister will not be done at any time by me for you; naught that the warmest friendship can prompt shall be wanting on my part towards him you love."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" answered Agnes, giving him her hand. "This is kind, indeed. But, tell me, were those words you spoke just now about his state but hazarded to show your meaning, or uttered as warning to me to prepare?"

She covered her eyes for a moment, and then added, in as firm a tone as she could command, "You said, if he should sink under his wounds. Oh, tell me, tell me! is this likely? He does not seem to amend, or so slowly that one day shows no gain upon the other; and these men who come to attend him, with their grave faces and scanty words, alarm rather than reassure me. My heart sinks when I see them."

"Nay; he will do well," said Oberntraut, in a kindly tone. "No thanks to them, I do believe. 'Tis despite of their art, rather than by it, that he will be cured: by a strong frame, and not by drugs and salves. He will do well. Even to-day he is better. There is more light in his eyes; his lips are not so pale; his voice was somewhat stronger. But there is one question I would ask you, Agnes. Do you yet know who he is? Are you aware that this name of Algernon Grey—"

"Oh, yes!" she answered, with a smile, cheered by the hopes he had given. "I have

long known all; but you should not doubt his honour in aught. He has not a thought that is not high and true."

"I do not doubt," he answered. "I am sure he is honest and noble; but many a tale hangs long upon the lips in times of trouble and of sickness. I heard this from some of his men, who have come in from Breslau, and who seem to love him much. They came asking for 'the earl,' and no one knew whom they meant till I questioned them. But a word or two more must be said, dear lady, before we part. I would fain that he cast away these men's medicaments. I firmly believe they keep him ill, and that, if left to nature, he would have been well ere now. It is very needful that he should recover speedily. The sky is growing very dark, lady; Tilly, that fierce butcher, is already on the Rhine; post after post has been lost by our weak generals. Though Franckenthal holds out, yet it, and Heidelberg, and Mannheim, are all the places of good strength that we possess; and what can I do with a few hundred men! or Horatio Vere, in Mannheim, with his handful of English! Heidelberg will not be long ere she sees the Bavarian under her walls. Herbert will not leave this castle so long as there is breath within him. I may be away, or dead—who can tell! and there must be some one to protect and guide you. We must have him well with all speed. Would he would cast away these drugs. They keep his chamber far too hot. Plain cold water and free air would do more than all these potions."

"Is there not a famous man at Hulbronn?" asked Agnes. "We could send for him."

"That is well bethought," answered Oberntraut. "But there is one man here who, though no physician, has studied nature and her secrets more than any of them—old Dr. Alting. I will go down and bring him up; and if he sanctions my plan, we will pursue it without asking further help. Farewell, for the present. Cheer him, cheer him, dear lady." And, thus saying, he hurried away.

Taking the path under the old arsenal, which stood in front of the large octagon tower, Oberntraut hastened down into the town, and soon reached the house of Dr. Alting. He asked no one for admission; but, with his usual impetuous spirit, opened the door of the outer chamber, and was walking straight towards the old professor's library, when his servant-maid suddenly appeared, and placed herself in the way, saying, "The doctor is busy, noble sir, and bid me not to let any one disturb him."

"I must disturb him," answered Oberntraut, putting her unceremoniously aside, and walking on towards a door, through which he heard voices speaking. The moment after, he laid his hand upon the lock, and pushed with his strong arm. Something resisted slightly; but the small bolt gave way ere he had time to think and withdraw his hand, and the door flew back.

Old Alting, with his black cap off, and grey hair streaming, ran instantly towards him, as if to stop his entrance; but, at the same time, Oberntraut saw clearly a man's figure, wrapped in a large falling cloak, pass through the opposite door.

"Why, how now, doctor!" he exclaimed "Are you busy with your familiar? I beg his

highness's pardon for intruding upon his conference with his master; and yours, too; but you must excuse me, for I have a friend sorely ill, up at the castle, of three bad wounds and two worse leeches; and I would fain have you tell me what you think of his case."

The old man seemed sadly discomposed and ruffled in temper. "Am I a physician or a chirurgeon either?" he cried. "In truth, Baron of Obertraut, I will not be thus disturbed when I have a pupil with me. I will not have aught to do with your friend. Let him get well as he can. It is not my trade to cure wounded men who get themselves hurt, brawling with their neighbours and breaking God's law."

"Nay, nay, my good doctor," exclaimed Obertraut. "Poor Algernon Grey has been doing naught of the kind. He was defending your friend Herbert's fair niece, that was all."

"Algernon Grey?" cried Doctor Alting. "Is it Algernon Grey? Why, I knew not he had returned. He has never been to see me: that was not right; but I will come—I will come."

"He could not come to see you, my good friend," replied Obertraut, "unless he was brought on men's shoulders; for he was well nigh knocked to pieces at Langenbrücken now more than two months ago, and has ever since been lying in the castle, with two men trying to promote his getting well."

"I will come to him," said Alting, more calmly; "though you are a rude visitor, my good young lord. Wait for me a moment, and I will go with you, if I can."

Thus saying, he left Obertraut, who muttered to himself, "If he can! What should stop him if he will!" The next moment he heard voices speaking again in the room beyond, and he walked to the window that he might not catch the words.

At the end of about ten minutes, the old man returned with a broad hat upon his head, and mantle over his shoulders, followed by another personage dressed in black, with his neck and chin buried in a deep ruff, pressed up by the collar of a large wrapping cloak; on his head, too, was an enormous black beaver, pressed far down over his brow, and his face was farther hidden—not by the ordinary moustache and small pointed tuft of the time, but by a wide-spreading beard, which covered his whole chin and cheeks. Obertraut gazed at him firmly for a moment; and Dr. Alting, as if imagining that the young Baron's inquiring look might embarrass his companion, said, in a quick and hurried tone, "This is a learned pupil of mine, who, since I saw him, has travelled in many lands, and has learned a great many curious and valuable secrets. He will go with us, and give us his advice."

"I thank him heartily," said Obertraut, gravely. "We had better set forth, my good friend; and, as the shortest way, we will go through the garden-gate, under the —, and then up through the subterraneans; I have the keys."

Thus saying, he moved towards the door, but stopped for a moment, courteously, to let the stranger go first. As soon as they were in the street, he led the way to a narrow lane,

which conducted to the old wall, below that part of the gardens where the valley had been filled up with rocks and earth to form rocks and terraces. A few hundred yards from the entrance of the lane, a small arch door was seen in the wall; and Obertraut, producing a key, opened it to give admission to his two companions. Locking the heavy, iron-plated door as soon as they were within, he looked around, and seeing some labourers working on a path to the right, he took the zig-zag road to the left. It was a good deal longer, as both Dr. Alting and himself well knew; but the worthy professor made no observation, and followed in silence. Some way up the slope, a small open arch with an iron gate was seen; but it also was opened by the young Baron's keys, and he led the party, by various stairs and passages, till they came out beneath the steps leading from the Altaa to one of the smaller entrances of the castle. Then, hurrying his steps, Obertraut, as if some sudden fit of impetuosity had come over him, mounted towards the higher parts of the building so rapidly, that the poor old professor was obliged to call for mercy.

"Well!" muttered Obertraut to himself, "the castle is nearly deserted now; and there is no great chance of meeting any one. This way, my reverend friend—in the chamber above lies my young companion;" and, going on more slowly, he opened the door of the chamber where Algernon Grey had remained ever since his arrival. Agnes Herbert was sitting by the bedside, with a book in her hand; and her maid was seated in the window, busy with some embroidery. But the young lady instantly closed the book when Obertraut and his companions appeared; and, beckoning her aside, the young Baron said, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, "I have brought Dr. Alting to see our friend Algernon; but I wish, dear lady, you would send for your uncle, to his lodging in the tower. He is down at the Trutzkaiser. Tell him I have something important to say to him, and will join him in a few minutes."

Agnes looked somewhat surprised at the request, for the message might as well have been conveyed by an ordinary servant; but Obertraut's face wore a peculiar expression; and, merely bowing her head, she turned away, and left the room with her maid.

In the mean while, Algernon Grey had turned round uneasily on his bed, and welcomed Dr. Alting with a faint smile.

"Lie still, lie still," said the old man, advancing, and taking his hand: "I have come to see what can be done for you. So, you have been wounded, it seems—and two months ill. They must be strange physicians, not to have killed you or cured you in that time!" and he pressed his fingers on the young man's pulse.

"I say that all he requires is fresh air and cold water," cried Obertraut: "if he has those he will be well in a week."

"As to fresh air, you are right," answered Dr. Alting. "The frost is gone, the wind is mild;—open that window at once. As to the cold water, we must inquire farther;" and he proceeded to examine the wounds in the

young gentleman's breast and shoulder. "Two months!" he said at length.

"Nay, well nigh ten weeks," answered Algeron Grey, faintly.

"Nay, then, cold water is not the remedy," said Dr. Altling; "good sound wine of the Rheingau—a moderate quantity at a time, but frequently repeated—and wholesome and nourishing food, is all that is required. Take no more of these medicines, my young friend;" and he pointed to some potions on the table; "they might be good enough at one time, but the disease has spent itself, and all you want is strength to heal your wounds. Is not that your opinion, my learned friend?" he continued, turning to the gentleman who had accompanied him.

"Assuredly!" said the other; "but I will add a remedy, which will greatly aid his cure. It is a secret, however, which no one must hear. If you two gentlemen will retire for a moment, I will join you at the door immediately."

(Obertraut instantly withdrew, without reply, and Dr. Altling followed more slowly; but as soon as they were on the corridor, and the door closed, Obertraut grasped the old man's arm, saying, in a low tone, and with an agitated look, "This is a terrible risk!—we have no force to defend the town, in case of sudden attack; it were better to send off for Vere and his men directly, and leave Mannheim to its fate, rather than suffer the King's person to be so risked;" and he took a step towards the head of the stairs.

"Stay, stay!" cried Dr. Altling, catching him by the sleeve; "let us hear farther, ere you act."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE sun had set; the early moon had risen; and the clear sky of the early spring-time was full of stars. A great deal of bustle had been observed in the castle, though it was now no longer tenanted by a host of servants; and the gay scene of courtly splendour which it had formerly displayed—the hurrying multitudes, the splendid dresses, the clanging trumpets, and the beating drums, had subsided into dulness, silence, and almost solitude. The ruined fortunes of the Palatinate house seemed shadowed forth in the desolate change which had come over their dwelling-place.

Yet, as I have said, an unusual degree of activity had appeared in the castle during the last two hours before sunset. Some seven or eight mounted men had gone forth in different directions, none of the ordinary inhabitants of the place knowing what was their errand. The young Baron of Obertraut himself rode out, followed by a single trooper; but, instead of going down into the plain, which was the direction he usually took, and where his men were quartered, he rode up by steep and precipitous paths—where, perhaps, a horse's hoof had never trod the ground before—round the hills looking upon the Rhine, and going from height to height, often pausing to gaze, shading his eyes with his hand, and seeming to scrutinize every path and road in the wide extent of country below him.

At length, just at sunset, he returned to the

castle, and inquired if any of the messengers had come back. Three had already arrived; and he examined them strictly as to what discoveries they had made in regard to the movements of the enemy's troops. They all agreed that Tilly and his forces had passed over the bridge which he had thrown across the Neckar, had directed his course towards the Rhine, and had crossed that river near Oppenheim.

This news seemed to give the young officer great satisfaction; and he proceeded from the court to the lodging of Colonel Herbert, where the door was carefully closed after his entrance. About an hour subsequently, as good a meal as could be prepared in the castle was carried up to the rooms of the English officer; but his own servant and Agnes Herbert received the dishes at the door, and the ordinary attendants were not suffered to enter. Another hour elapsed, and then Herbert and Dr. Altling came down the stairs of the tower alone, looked everywhere round when they reached the door of the tower, and then walked slowly on, taking their way along the inner rampart towards the library-tower, and thence, by the small doors and steps, into the garden. There they turned towards the grating of the arch by which Dr. Altling had been brought that morning to the castle; and Herbert, opening the gate, paused beside it conversing with his old friend.

They had been followed, however, for some way by another party; for, while they were walking along the rampart, Agnes had descended the stairs with the gentleman who had accompanied the old professor in the morning; and they took, too, their way to the gardens. The young Baron of Obertraut, and Colonel Herbert's servant armed with a stout luck, followed at a distance of about fifty yards, and, in whatever way Agnes and her companion turned their steps, kept them still in sight.

The fair lady's path seemed somewhat devious: now it was turned towards the lower garden; then, at a word from the gentleman by her side, she mounted the steps, and wound round amongst the trees above, towards the great terrace; then down to the parterres with their curious arabesques; then up again by another flight of steps to the terrace once more; the moon shining bright upon their path the whole way.

"It is a weakness, I know," said her companion, "to cling thus to particular scenes, which only fill one with melancholy regret; but here, fair lady, have passed so many happy hours, that I feel it difficult to tear myself away, although these inanimate objects present nothing to my mind but the memories of pleasures, gone for ever, perhaps."

"The past has a spirit, your Majesty," answered Agnes, "which animates the dull form of the present. The soul of happiness departed, I can well understand, gives life to this changed scene; and to your royal eyes rise up, with every object that we pass, some peculiar hours or days which can never die to the affectionate remembrance of the heart. But let me hope, too, that there lives a future, when once more, amidst these scenes, with all you love best on earth, the days of old shall be renewed, and these dark moments be recalled but as a tempest-cloud that the wind has long swept away."

Frederic shook his head sadly. "I know not," he said; "God grant it! but there is a dark foreboding at my heart that the curse of ambition is upon me, and that the joys which I did not estimate sufficiently when they were mine, are snatched away for ever."

"Ah, no!" said Agnes, sadly; "I would fain think that honour, and virtue, and high purposes can never sink, overwhelmed, before fraud, and violence, and wrong."

"Yet such is too often the course of things here below," replied Frederic. "It will not be for ever. But the world has a life as well as we, dear lady; and our lives are but parts of the world's life. The time will be, when, in the long existence of the universe, all things shall be set right and honesty triumph; but, alas! I fear no man's time is wide enough to give space for hope that evil suffered will have compensation here. I might add, no man is good enough to complain even when his best purposes are the steps that lead to the punishment that his faults deserve. Alas! fair Heidelberg, thou place of so many memories and so many dreams, I must quit thee once more—for ever—yes, I feel it is for ever!" And, with his head bent and his eyes full of tears, he descended the steps and hurried on to the spot where Herbert and Dr. Alting waited for him.

"Herbert," said the unfortunate Prince, "I go; but you must stay, and, if it be possible, defend this place we both so fondly love from the rude spoiling hands of the enemy. It would be bitter indeed to know that the Bavarian was in these halls; that his brutal soldiery were wasting and devastating all that a long line of princes have with care and skill been bringing to perfection; that the scenes of love and peace—the dwellings of art, and poetry, and science, were polluted by men who have neither feeling nor reverence for such higher things. I do beseech you, my noble friend, aid to defend this place to the best of your power, though some wrong has been done you by others, though not by me."

"With the last drop of my blood, Sire," answered Herbert; "but in truth it is time your Majesty should go. You have a long and dangerous journey before you ere you can rejoin Mansfeld; but I trust that it will pass safely, and that together you will strike such a stroke at the enemy as will keep him far from these walls. Have you all the papers you sought?"

"All, all," answered the King; "but some one must go with me to lock the gate after I and the good Doctor here have passed."

"That will I, your Majesty," said Oberntraut, who had now joined the rest; but Frederic replied, "No, no, you had better mount at once and ride down to your men as we agreed. Herbert, you have to see that no one else quits the castle for two hours. Does this dear lady know the way?"

"Right well," replied Herbert: "I took care of that long ago."

"And will she have no fears in returning through those passages alone?" inquired the King.

"None, Sire," answered Agnes, with a smile; "I have become insured to real dangers, and fear no imaginary ones."

"Well, then—farewell, my friends," said Frederic, shaking hands with Herbert and Oberntraut; "if we never meet again here below, God bless you! and we shall meet hereafter, I trust."

Thus saying, he passed through the open gate with Dr. Alting. Agnes received a large key from her uncle, while Oberntraut took a dark lantern from the servant, unshaded it, and placed it in her hands. Thus provided, she followed quickly upon the steps of the King, and lighted him through the long and winding passage which at that time led down from the castle to the town. Not a word was spoken as they passed between the heavy walls of rude masonry, on which the green damp stood thick, and through which the water from the earth around oozed in many places; but at the door leading into the city, Frederic paused and pressed Agnes's hand, saying, "Farewell, my sweet cousin! Wear this ring for my sake and for the Queen's. See our young friend, Algernon, to-night, and I think you will find that the intelligence I gave has proved a better medicine for his wounds than any the doctors have prescribed. It was the cup of hope, fair Agnes; but it were well that, as soon as he can bear a horse's pace, he should set out for England without delay of any kind. Once more, farewell!"

Agnes put the key in the lock and threw the door open for the prince and his old companion to pass; and then saying, "God speed your Majesty!" saw the King depart from the dwelling of his ancestors for the last time.

With slow and thoughtful steps, and eyes that more than once filled with tears, the fair girl trod her way back towards the castle. She took not, however, the same course which Oberntraut had followed when he led Frederic up some hours before; but, turning to the right at the top of the ascent, where a long gallery ran for some way round the side of the hill, she came to a door which led forth into the open air within the gate, near the great battery which connected the defences of the castle with the old town wall long since destroyed. The exit was into a narrow passage between the armory and the tennis-court; and there she found Colonel Herbert pacing slowly up and down, awaiting her coming.

"I have been up to see Algernon, my love!" he said, "and the poor youth seems much better this evening. He asked if you would not come again to-night, Agnes: so I promised for you, and left your girl to wait at the foot of the stairs. Would to Heaven that he would get well quickly! for every report of the enemy's movements makes me tremble till there is some one to protect you in case I should be taken away."

The colour mounted into Agnes's cheek; for these were the first words that Herbert had ever uttered having a reference to the probability of a union between Algernon Grey and herself.

"I am sure he would protect me," she said, with a little of that timid hypocrisy which women ever practise even to their own hearts; but the next moment she added more frankly, "the King has just told me that it will be absolutely necessary for Algernon, as soon as he can travel, to go to England for a time."

"That is unfortunate indeed," said Herbert, thoughtfully; "but what does the King know of his affairs?"

"Nay, I cannot tell," replied Agnes timidly. "His Majesty gave him happy news this evening, it would seem, and that has doubtless done him good. It is also very likely that he should have heard from his ambassadors in England, much that has not reached us here."

"True," replied Herbert, "a man of his rank is ever food for busy tongues. But there is one thing, my child, which must not be long delayed. He must know all respecting her whom he has chosen."

"Oh, hush!" cried Agnes, in much agitation, "I know not that he has chosen me—I cannot tell that—"

"Then he has not yet asked your hand?" said Herbert quickly.

"No," replied Agnes, and was pausing there with some anxiety respecting the effect of this information upon Herbert, when she suddenly remembered a chance expression of Algernon Grey's the very day before he had been so sadly wounded; and she added, "I know that he loves me—that he did not conceal; but he said that he would speak with you as soon as we arrived—tell all—explain all."

Herbert mused for a moment: "That was right," he said at length, "that was quite right; and I can easily conceive, Agnes, that the hours of sickness and despondency have not been those he would choose to execute his purpose. Still, let the explanations first come from you, my love. It were quite as well that, ere he says one word more, he should know fully what he is doing. I do not doubt him, Agnes—do you?"

"Less than I should doubt myself," answered Agnes, warmly. "I will do as you tell me; I would have done so before, but I had not your permission; yet, surely, it cannot be done, while he is still so ill."

"Oh, no," answered Herbert; "there is time enough. Let health come back, at least in some degree; and then, the first time that he goes forth to walk in the gardens here, let him hear the tale. It is pleasant in the sunshine and the free air, beneath green trees and amidst sweet flowers, to tell such a story of times gone. The mind pauses on it untrammelled with the worldly thoughts of crowded cities; the heart opens to it unoppressed by the heavy air of the close room. In the presence of heaven and of God's works, the pure, high feelings which nature gave at first, but which hang their heads like sickly city-flowers amongst the multitude, raise themselves up refreshed; and we understand and sympathize with the sorrows and the hopes of others, and feel the link of kindred between ourselves and all mankind. Take some such moment, my sweet child; it is but fair to him and yourself."

Thus saying, he led her on to the castle, and to the foot of the stairs which led to Algernon Grey's room. Her maid was waiting for her; and, thus accompanied, she went up, and was well repaid by seeing the brighter and more cheerful look, which, to her eyes, was full of the sugaries of returning health. Nor was she mistaken, for, every day from that hour forward, Algernon Grey gained ground against dis-

ease. His wounds healed rapidly. The languor and the feebleness they had left behind passed away, and at the end of little more than a week he was able to rise and sit by the open window, and listen to Agnes as she sung. Spring advanced, too, early and radiant; and several causes of disquietude were removed from the inhabitants of the castle. News came, not only that Frederic had recrossed the Rhine in safety and joined his army on the other side, but that, aided by his bold friend, Count Mansfeld, he had defeated the Imperial army, and forced Tilly himself to retreat. No speedy attack of Heidelberg was, consequently, to be expected; and Herbert employed the time of respite thus afforded in strengthening still further the defences of the place.

It need not be said that the heart of Agnes Herbert grew lighter and more cheerful hour by hour. How soon it is in youth that we forget the storms and tempests that pass over us! The drops are scarcely dry upon the grass ere the sunshine seems to us more bright; the distant sky more clear than ever; and thus it was with Agnes Herbert—ay, and with her lover also, though he had a wider knowledge of the world. The dark events which had taken place in Bohemia, if not forgotten, were remembered as present joy, only more sparkling; and, when Agnes walked forth one day through the gardens above the shining Neckar, with Algernon once more by her side, it seemed to her the brightest hour of existence; and she could scarcely bring her heart to fear that the coming time might present days as dark as those that had been passed. On they went for more than an hour, walking slowly, for his strength had not fully returned; but their conversation was like a gay mountain-stream, bounding the brilliant leaps from one point to another. They sat down to rest; they rose up and walked on again; and they might have rambled far and long, had not a quick step behind them caused Agnes suddenly to turn round.

The person who followed was her lover's page, with eager haste in his look; and, the moment he came up, he held out a letter to his master, exclaiming, "A messenger from your uncle, my lord, has brought this post-haste from England."

Algernon Grey took it calmly, opened the packet and read. But Agnes could see his countenance change; his brow contracted—his lip quivered—his cheek grew red.

"This is bad news, yet good, my Agnes," he said. "To tell the bad first, I must away to England without an hour's delay; but, as some consolation, I learn that all those difficulties and impediments which seemed raised up like a barrier between me and happiness are now giving way, and, ere a month be over, must certainly fall to the ground."

"To England, without an hour's delay!" cried Agnes. "Oh, you cannot go! You are unfit for such a journey."

"Nay, not so," replied her lover. "To Mannheim will be the worst part of the affair. Then dropping down the Rhine in a light boat would but refresh me, were it not that I part from you, my Agnes; but the joyful thought of my return must cheer me; and, though the hours will be

long, they will not be many, ere I return to claim this hand, not promised, yet mine, I know."

"Oh, the dread uncertainty of the future!" said Agnes, with a deep sigh and eyes full of tears. "Had any one told me, Algernon, but a few brief months ago, when I first met you here, and wandered through these gardens with you, that I should have seen such sights, and witnessed such disasters, should I have believed it!—should I have believed even that I myself should be so changed in thoughts, in feelings, almost in spirit, I may say! And what may not the coming months, too, bring! I thought it was bitter enough, when I parted at Prague from those I loved dearly, from those connected with me by the ties of kindred, with a strange, uncertain fate before both them and me; but what will it be now, to part with you!"

"Let us not cloud the moment, dearest Agnes," said Algernon Grey, "which in itself is a sad one, with gloomy anticipations. I go, I acknowledge, full of hope; for the thought of being freed from a detested bond, which bars my union with her I love, is too joyful not to lighten even the pangs of parting. But you say, my Agnes, that at Prague you left those connected with you by the ties of kindred; I knew not that you had kindred there."

Agnes shook her head sadly and thoughtfully; for the tone of the mind contrives to extract from every event reflections of the same hue with itself. "It shows how little we can count even on an hour," she said. "I had thought to-day to tell you, amidst these fair scenes, a melancholy tale of days long gone—to dwell upon it, and to let you hear each incident, without which a story such as this is but a lifeless sort of stick, like a vine stripped of its leaves in the winter season. But now, as we go back, I must do it drily and briefly. My mother was the Abbess of a noble convent in France, of the high family of Latour d'Auvergne, and, consequently, by the father's side second cousin, and by the mother's cousin-german to the Electress Dowager, Louisa Juliana. In the course of the war, an English gentleman, of high family but small fortune, was wounded severely whilst serving under Henry the Fourth of France, was brought to the small town of Mousson, where the Abbey stood, and was tended kindly by the good sisters. The greater part of the family of Latour are zealous Protestants, as you know; but this branch has always been vehemently Catholic; and the young Abbess had been brought up in that faith. You know the degree of liberty that nuns of high rank have in France; so that the vows they take form very little restraint upon their intercourse with the world. The Abbess saw my father often; acquaintance, with kind care on the one side and gratitude on the other, soon changed into friendship and to love. My mother was frightened at first at her feelings; and when my father first ventured to speak his affection, fled from him in terror and in anger. But they met again, and then he found means to shake her trust in the dogmas of the Church to which she had hitherto belonged. He brought her into communication with a Protestant minister. The Bible in its simple purity was laid before her. Her eyes were opened, and she re-

nounced the superstitious faith! She dared not do so openly, however; for she was surrounded by powerful and unscrupulous relations, who would have hesitated at no means to punish, where they could not restrain; and she was wedded in secret to my father, till the opportunity served for removing her to a Protestant land. It soon became necessary that she should quit the convent, however; and they removed to a small solitary place in the Vosges, where I was born. Various events detained them between four and five years, living concealed in profound retirement; but they were sought for everywhere; and my father found, at length, that it would be necessary to fly, for that a cew had been obtained to their retreat, and pursuit was coming near. They, consequently, set off for the Rhine on an autumn evening, my father and mother in a carriage, with a few servants on horseback, and my father's horse led behind. Their movements, however, had been watched. In passing through a wood the carriage was fired upon, and my mother and one of the men wounded.* She said, at first, that the injury was but slight; and my father, springing out, mounted his horse, and attacked the assassins. They were speedily put to flight; and one of them was killed, by my father's own hand. When they came to examine, they found that it was my mother's own nephew who had fallen—but that she never knew; and, pursuing their journey rapidly, they reached the Palatinate, where, at the town of Franckenthal, the wound my mother had received was first dressed. It was then seen to be much more serious than had been supposed. She lingered a week, and then expired in my father's arms."

Agnes paused; and Algernon Grey demanded eagerly, "But what became of your father?"

"He hastened hither," continued Agnes, "told his tale to the Electress, who had already been made aware of part, and eagerly besought her countenance and protection for myself. She promised she would be to me as a mother; and she has been so, as you know, Algernon. But my mother's brother, a stern and cruel man, was in high favour with the Queen of France; and, as soon as it was known my father had found refuge here, the Elector was required to give him up to answer for my cousin's death. Could a fair trial have been expected, he would have surrendered; but it was known that such was not to be obtained, and he was obliged to fly. He served for several years in distant lands; and when it was supposed that men's passions had become more calm, he returned to be near his child. You have often seen him—know him well, Algernon. But Duke John of Zweibrücken, who was guardian to the Elector Frederic at the time of his return, insisted that some concealment was still necessary; and my father, assuming the character of his brother, who had died the year before, has passed ever since for my uncle, in order not to give offence to the court of France."

"I had some suspicion," said Algernon Grey; "for there has been a tenderness, dear Agnes, in his manner towards you, that naught but the yearnings of paternal love could give. And now, dearest Agnes, we are coming near the

* This is fact, not romance.

castle. I, too, ought to open my whole heart to your father. I fear, however, there is not time; for, when we came away, he said he was going down to strengthen the defences by the bridge. Send down to him, however, dear girl, and ask him to return. I will wait till the last moment, in order to see him; but I ought to reach Mannheim before it is dark."

The messenger, however, could not find Colonel Herbert. Two hours passed by without his coming; and, having waited with his men mounted in the court till not more than half an hour of daylight remained, Algernon Grey tore himself away and rode on towards Mannheim.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

In all ages of which we have record, England has been unlike any other country in the world; nor has it been alone in the character of the people, their political institutions, and their religious feelings, that it has differed from all others; but the very aspect of the land has been totally apart, shadowing forth in its very look the mind of the people. We see forests and mountains, rocks, rivers, and cataracts, wide fields and waving corn, in other countries; but where else would you see a green bowery lane like that, canopied with boughs and tapestried with flowers, down which those two figures are now walking slowly on? It is England all over—sweet, peaceful, pleasant-looking England. Though the age is remote from that in which we live; though the costume both of the man and woman is very different from our own; though the plumed hat, and the hanging cloak, and the slashed sleeve, might lead one to suppose one's self amongst Spaniards; yet look at the trees with the ivy creeping up them, the yellow banks, the small fields, the trim hedgerows, and not a doubt remains that the scene is English.

But we must just listen to their conversation, too; and that, alas! is very un-English. We must remember, however, that the age was one when a number of events had tended to corrupt society generally, and the court in particular; when the tone of the human mind, both in Britain and in France, had become debased by the conduct and example of the highest personages in the realm; when the monarch on the throne of England at least presented to his people the pattern of all that is despicable, low, and vicious in a man, all that is hateful and contemptible in a monarch; a tyrant without energy or courage; a debauchee without fire or passion; a tricky politician, without perspicuity or judgment; vain of his religion, yet wavering in his doctrines, irreligious in his conduct, and blasphemous in his discourse; proud of his cunning, yet always deceived and frustrated; assuming the tone of command, yet led like an infant or a fool; governed by others, though a despot himself; and only perfect in grossness, selfishness, and treachery. With such a sovereign; with minions imitating and deceiving him; with a court hungry of gold and avaricious of vice; with the scaffold and the prison offered as rewards for virtue, energy, and genius: can we be surprised that the poison spread, more or less, through

all classes; and that the nobles, brought more immediately within the pestilential atmosphere of the court, were peculiarly affected by the moral malady of the time? Can we wonder that every kind of wickedness which the perverse heart of man can conceive or generate was rife; that corruption of all kinds was too common to excite attention; that brawls and murders were heard of every day; and that the enemy or the rival, whom the knife could not reach, found death in the platter or cup? Can we wonder that such conversations as the following were heard by the ears of the air every day?

"He must be disposed of," said the gentleman, speaking to a lady of extraordinary beauty who walked by his side; "he must be disposed of, that is very clear."

"Ay, but how is it to be done?" asked the lady. "It is very well for you to counsel me, but give me no help."

"Nay, sweetest Kate," replied her companion, "I am willing to give you every help in the world; but I have heard that, during my long and tedious absence from your fair side, you did not fail to console yourself by reasonable tenderness for this same object of your present hate."

"And do you believe such tales?" she exclaimed, turning her flashing eyes upon him. "You do not, William, you do not! I am the creature of your hands; you have made me what I am. From infancy till now you have tutored and led, guided, commanded me—no, not commanded, but at least directed; and you should know—"

"For that very reason I do know," he replied, "that it is the most natural and likely thing in the world, dear Kate, that you should seek a little consolation for a lover's absence. I say no more, I imply no more; for I know that, if real love were in the case, the bold, brave spirit in your heart, guided and directed as you say it has been by me, would even to myself avow the fact, and daringly set all my rage and jealousy at naught. Is it not so, sweet Kate?"

"Ay," she answered with a smile, "even so."

"Well then," he continued, "as you see I understand you fully, and neither suspect nor doubt, but only think that in a vacant hour dull, and for mere idleness, you have trifled with a growing passion in this great lord, till it has risen into a flame which has somewhat scorched the fingers of the kinder—I say it must be by some means drowned out. The only question is how, and that we must consider. But in order to judge of the best means, I must know fully the provocation he has given, my fair love. Nay, knit not your fair brows, dear Kate, with such a puzzled look: I will help you to explanations."

"You cannot," she said; "there can be no explanations, William Ifford. It suffices to me, and should suffice to you, that he has offended and insulted me—her whom you say you love."

"And do love," answered he whom we have hitherto seen under the name of Lovet, "ay, better far than all the thousand I have loved and been loved by before. But yet it matters much, my Kate; for, if the injury and the in-

salt, as from something you let drop a day or two ago I do suspect, touches me in the slightest possible degree, my course is very plain, and I will cut his throat ere the moon be an inch broader. But if it refer to you alone, it might be dangerous to take the step of the duello on such a topic, as giving point to certain rumours of our close friendship which would rear all our plans."

The lady looked down, bending her large, dark, haughty eyes stercely upon the ground; but she murmured in a low tone, "He treated me as he might treat a common harlot; and when I mortified his vanity by cold repulse, he spoke of you, called you my paramour, vowed he could prove the facts and make my shame public to all the world. Now, though I would break, by any means—at any risk, that idle tie to your cold hypocritical cousin Hillington, yet I would fain do so without having the finger of every smooth, well-concealed, mock-virtuous woman of the court pointed at me in scorn. He said he could prove it, I tell you. You start, William, and turn pale: that is not as if your blood fired up like mine."

"My blood has something else to do, bright Kate," answered her cousin. "Why I started was, because your tale awakens a strange doubt in my mind. There was safe in my house, when I left England, a little agate casket with a secret lock, which kept good guard over your dear, long-preserved letters. Here is the key hanging ever round my neck; but yesterday when I sought for that casket, I could not find it; and, thinking that it had been mislaid, I left the search, trusting to meet with it another day. Can any one have stolen those letters?—At all events that man must not live much longer; but, my dear Kate, it will not do to fight on such a cause of quarrel. Nay, moreover, if I seek occasion against him, he will judge rightly of the cause, and spread his tale of scandal to the world,—perhaps produce his proofs, if he really have any. We must employ quieter means, wear a smooth face towards him, and, as we do with a wild beast that we fear, lure him into a trap well prepared beforehand. How did you part, in enmity or calmly?"

The lady had turned very pale as he spoke of the loss of the casket; and some time passed ere she answered his question. He repeated it, however, in a quiet, tender tone; and, looking up, she said, "He cowed me—rage sank beneath fear, and I smoothed my brow—nay, even smiled and laughed, in order to gain time, till I could speak with you. But you were long ere you arrived, and now it is too late to perfect any plans. He comes to-morrow evening, and has promised to bring the proofs he spoke of with him."

"Not too late, not too late," answered her companion. "I will speed home like lightning, search for these letters, be with you again to-morrow early; and then, if you have courage and resolution, we will find means to rid us of one whom we cannot deal with openly. I will have all prepared if you will but second me. Where will my lord, your uncle, be to-morrow?"

"A hundred miles hence and more," replied the lady. "He and my good aunt, do not return for two days to come."

"Then all will go easily," rejoined the other. "The man must die—he must not reach Royston alive."

"But blood is soon traced," she said, in a tone of hesitation.

"We will have no blood," replied her lover, with a smile: "men die occasionally of very rapid diseases. I will plan it all—you must execute."

"But how shall we get the papers from him," asked the lady, "without—"

"That must be cared for," answered Lovet. You must be tender, my fair Kate, till you have got him to produce his proofs; give him fair hopes, and lead him on. He will sup here, of course; and after supper, when he has trifled with somewhat dangerous viands, bid him show the weighty evidence he spoke of. When they are all spread forth, I will come in, to your surprise and his, and take my own again. Then, if he be inclined to quarrel, one hasty thrust, given ere any one has time to bear his tale, will settle all, and I shall pass blameless for despatching one whom I found insulting my sweet cousin. It will be a claim, too, on her love—a fair motive in the world's eyes for her (in gratitude, to give me her soft hand."

The lady smiled with a meaning look. There was no surprise; there was no horror; there seemed hardly to be any fear. Had her mind been conversant with such ideas before! Who can tell! Such deeds were assuredly common in those days, and at all events, they were commonly reported. The rumour of crimes always generate fresh ones of the same character. There is an infection in the very sound of such deeds, and the mind that hears it often catches the moral pestilence and dies. As she thought—and for some moments she did not reply—a look of triumph rose in her glittering eyes. "Ay!" she repeated, "ay! he shall rue it. Yes, he shall rue it! William, you are right. It would not do to raise a clamour about the man's death, by taking your usual mode of settling such affairs; but against one thing you must guard right carefully, that his death be not traceable to us—unless, indeed, it be in a hasty brawl, where weapons are soon out, and execution done ere men have time to think. I mean, if he quits my house alive, they must not be able to show that it was in the cup, or in the food which he there partook that he found death."

"I will take care," said her cousin, significantly; "but you must be both ready and resolute, my sweet Kate—no doubt—no hesitation—no weak remorse."

"I have none!" replied the lady, lifting her hand boldly; "we kill a wolf or a tiger, a snake or a shark. It is the first principle of nature and of right to destroy that which would destroy us. His death is needful to my life. He dies, or I die. Nay, more; I feel the hunter's spirit within me, and, life for life, I would rather die myself with him, than not to see him die."

"His offence must have been very bitter," answered her cousin; "though it was very needful to our happiness that Hillington should be out of our way, you never thought of using such means with him."

"I may have thought of it," answered the lady musing; "but I would not have done it,

William. In moments of eager impatience, I may have wished him dead—nay, have said so, I think, to you; but yet I would have practised naught against his life. Hillingdon never offended me. He loved me not; but, as I loved him not, that was no offence. His tone was courteous, too, when he did write to me or to my uncle. Plainly and boldly he said he wished the contract dissolved; but I wished it too, and therefore, it was a kindness, not an injury. His very absence, that he might never see me, had—as he turned it, and I believe as he felt it—a certain courtesy. Nay, Hillingdon, though cold and stiff, and opposit in almost everything to my nature and my wishes, is still a high and noble-minded man, a gentleman in heart and spirit."

Her companion bit his lip, for he loved not to hear his cousin's praises from that lady's tongue. He was silent, however, and she proceeded: "But this man has, indeed, offended me bitterly, as you say. Encouraged by a light smile, and perhaps some idle freedom—I will not deny it—he thought I had become his slave, assumed the air of triumph, boasted, I doubt not, of his conquest amongst drunken comrades, and thought mine was a heart that would bear the insolent tone, the rude assumption of success, the air and words of conquest. Fool! I taught him better; and then he threatened to turn my bold contempt to burning shame—he did more than threaten, William. He it is, and he alone, who has staid the dissolution of my infant marriage with Hillingdon. The judges were all agreed—the king himself was won, when this man stepped in. The minion persuaded the king, by his cringing arts, to pause. Nay, look not doubtful! He told me so himself; with scornful triumph vowed my fate was in his hands; and said, if I had not treated him so disdainfully, I should have been now as free as air. Do not the facts bear out the assertion! All that was required by any one was Hillingdon's oath in open court, that he had never seen me since I was ten years old. He came and gave it. Then, suddenly, the king paused and prevaricated, and Algernon returned disgusted and despairing. Have I not cause to say this man is a viper in my way? Have I not a right to set my heel upon his head!"

"Assuredly!" replied William Ifford; "and the sooner the better, my sweet Kate. I see that your mind is made up, and your courage equal to the task. He sups here; he will dine at Hertford, at the inn there. I will take care—though the deed cannot be done there on account of the many eyes upon us—that some circumstance of suspicion shall occur at Hertford, to direct the doubts of men afterwards away from your house. I have a powder brought from Italy, which I have heard has been most serviceable in the great house of Medici. May it prove as useful to us! And now farewell, my Kate. I will not go up to the mansion with you, as I must return to-morrow morning. Do not pause and ponder on our plans, lest your resolution fail."

"No fear!" she answered, with a calm look; "my courage is firmer than you think, William. Adieu!"

Sir William Ifford left her, and walked back to a village about half a mile distant, where he

had left his horse. At first he went quick, as if in haste; but after he had turned out of the lane his pace became slower, and he meditated, murmuring a part of his thoughts as he proceeded. "A dangerous housekeeper!" he said; "and yet a glorious creature—not the most faithful in her loves, I fear—yet how can I blame her! I have not been right faithful myself—and she was alone. We will both do better when we are wedded. There must be more in this affair than she thinks fit to own—she could not hate so strongly had she not somewhat loved. Well, when he is dead that will be wiped out; her own hand will avenge both herself and me. Yet it is hardly politic to teach her tricks which she may practise hereafter on myself. I am a bold man to link myself to one so well tutored; but for such a woman, and for such a fortune, who would not be bold! All that will be needed is care for the future, and a sure antidote in my doublet pocket."

Full of such reflections he reached the village, and, mounting his horse, rode on to a house which, with the small estate around it, had descended to him from his mother. His patrimonial property had been long spent, and even this was not unencumbered. Springing to the ground, he mounted the six steps which led up into an arched porch, covered with ivy, opened the door, and went in. A servant was called, and ordered to bring a fresh horse, and then William Ifford paused a moment in the hall, bending his eyes upon the marble pavement in deep meditation. It seemed of a very gloomy character too. Perhaps it was remorse that moved him; for the heart, however sunk in vice and crime, shrinks from the touch of a new crime. Rarely does it happen, that it is so corrupted that there is not some sound spot left somewhere; and so long as there is, that part will tremble at the first touch of the corroding hand which has destroyed all the rest. His brow became very cloudy, and gathered thick over his deep, keen eye; his lip quivered; and the fingers of the hand, which had fallen by his side, were seen to move slowly together till they were clenched firmly in the palm. The light, the scoffing, and the scornful will have their moments of thought, of doubt, and of depression, as the vicious of regret. There comes upon us all, against our will, we know not how, we know not whence, a shadow, as from the gloomy, inevitable rock before us, clouding the sparkling sunshine in which we sported, rendering the gay dreams gloomy, and the clear future obscure. It is the time to ask ourselves, whither that path tends, where those sports may end. But still the counteracting power of evil, waging his eternal war against all good, suggests some reason, presents some excuse for following the impulse of the wilful heart along the course of error; till at length when all warnings have been given, and every opportunity neglected, the toils of our own acts close round us; and, in the inextricable net which we ourselves have aided to weave, we struggle in vain; till death takes us forth, and an unknown state begins.

Slowly and even sadly Sir William Ifford raised his eyes and cast a melancholy glance around the dim old hall. There was an air of desolation and neglect about it, very different

from the gay and splendid scenes in which he was accustomed and loved to move. The look of poverty was stamped upon it; and in an instant flashed before his eyes the images of a long future of care and penury, and forced self-denial and niggardly restraint. "It must be," he cried, "it must be done;" and hurrying to an old oaken cabinet, which he opened with one of the keys he wore about him, took out an extremely minute vial filled with some white substance, and gazed at it attentively for an instant; then, placing it in his pocket, he entered his bed-chamber, and drew forth from a large chest a masker's beard, nearly white, and several separate locks of silver hair. With these, put safely up, he rode away towards the town of Hertford, which he reached shortly after nightfall; but, before he entered the street, he fastened the false locks to the lining of his hat, and brought them over his forehead and his neck. The beard completed a disguise sufficiently close to prevent any eyes, but such as knew him very well, from recognising him; and then, entering the town, he dismounted at a small public house, and walked on foot towards the principal inn in the great street. About half-an-hour after, he might be seen speaking in the court-yard to a man in a white night-cap and apron. Their conversation seemed merry, too; for few even knew better how to assume familiar, courtesies towards the lower classes, when he liked it, than William Ifford.

"You foolish dog," he cried at length; "will you lose a good gold piece just for your vanity in your art? I tell you it is for a bot with him. I vowed I would make him eat bitter pottage ere a week were over; and I ask you not to do aught that can hurt him. There's many an innocent herb, and salutary too, that tastes like soot in the mouth. Take your choice of herbs, and stuff his pottage and the first two fishes full of it. Go out into the garden and get some bitter endive, or any other purifier of the blood. So you will be sure that no harm can come of it. I must have it done, however; and here is a gold piece for your pains."

The man seemed still to hesitate; but William Ifford doubled the offered bribe, and the cook's virtue could not resist the temptation.

"Keep your own counsel," said the gentleman, as he left him, "and all is safe. I shall laugh heartily to-morrow night, when I hear him curse the bitter that he had at Hertford."

Thus saying, he turned away, mounted his horse again and rode back. On the following morning early he was once more by the Lady Catherine's side; and for two long hours they talked eagerly with meaning looks, but in low tones, as if they feared to be overheard, although they well knew that no ear was near to hear them. But there is a consciousness in crime of an ever open eye, an ear that is never closed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Yes, sir, yes," said the King of England, rolling upon his left leg, and sticking out his right hip, as if he had dislocated the joint, at the same time thrusting one hand into the wide open pocket of his black velvet hose, "yes,

sir, ye had better gang your way back. As ye've staid awa sae lang, I think ye may stay awa a while mair. We'll just conseeder o' the matter—haud your tongue, Steenie; nane o' yer clavers; I've said the word!"

The Duke of Buckingham, who had stepped forward, as if to speak, drew back again with a very significant and uncourtier-like look of disgust and impatience; but Buckingham by this time rested the ladder of ambition rather upon the favour of the Prince than the King, and feared not every now and then to express his dissent somewhat boldly from the Monarch's views.

James's words were addressed to Algernon, Earl of Hillingdon, who stood before him in the midst of a circle of courtiers and flatterers somewhat surprised at the cold, callous, determined manner of the young peer.

The Monarch ended his sentence; but then, seeing that the young lord did not withdraw, he added somewhat sharply: "God's life, man! you shall know our pleasure when it is time."

"I hope your Majesty's pleasure may be to do me justice," answered Algernon Grey; "but, by your gracious permission, I must add a few words before I go. Famous lawyers, bearing high offices in your royal court, have pronounced this marriage null by reason of the age of the contracting parties. Ecclesiastical judges, appointed by yourself, have come to the same conclusion. Your Majesty hesitates, from some scruples, to suffer the sentence to be pronounced; but let me add, that I must by some means soon learn whether this contract, entered into in my infancy, is a marriage or not. If not, I have naught to say; for all parties are free. But if the law pronounces it a marriage, I must without loss of time move my peers for a divorce on account of the lady's adultery with a person high in your royal favour."

"Hout, tout," cried the King, with his sallow face flushing, and his thick lips quivering, while his large tongue rolled round and round in his mouth, as if he had a plum, or some other extraneous substance therein; "By —, you shall have neither one nor the other. What! are we not ourselves the supreme head both of the church and the law, God's vicegerent in this pair kingdom of England! Awa wi' ye, sir; and let me hear nae mair. Tak the man awa; and with a blasphemous oath he added: "ye'll drive me daft."

Prince Charles advanced to his father's side and tried to calm him; while the Duke of Buckingham took the Earl's arm and led him gently from the King's presence.

"Go, Hillingdon, go," he said; "and do not enrage him more. We will do the best for you. You have said too much already, my lord."

"Not more than was needful to say, Duke," replied Algernon Grey, somewhat sharply; but then, feeling that irritation had made him ungracious towards a man who had exerted himself strenuously in his behalf, he took Buckingham's hand, adding, "Pardon me, your Grace, I thank you a thousand times for all that you have done; but it moves me, I do confess, to see a pitiful, unworthy, ungentlemanly upstart, like this Lord —, have power to pervert the course of justice, and impede the operation

of the law. This is a bitter disappointment to me altogether; and your Grace must pardon something in a man so circumstanced."

"I do, I do," answered Buckingham; "and I counselled you but for your own advantage. Leave the kingdom as soon as may be, and trust to me and his Royal Highness." He paused an instant; and then, laying his hand on Algernon's arm, he added, with a proud and significant air, "This man is my enemy as well as yours! Is not that sufficient?"

"Methinks, it ought to be," answered Algernon Grey; "but in this strange world, where merit and unworthiness, wisdom and folly, seem to succeed alternately, as if upon the chances of the dice, one may be permitted always to doubt what will come next. However, I will follow your Grace's advice; and, repeating my thanks, withdraw."

"The sooner the better," answered Buckingham; "for the Tower is near at hand; and your best friends might find it difficult to keep you out, if the King be wilful; or to get you out, if once in."

Thus saying, he turned away; and Algernon Grey retired from the palace, and proceeded to his house on the bank of the river, in what is, and was then called the Strand.

"Pack up everything for instant departure, Tony," he said, speaking to his old servant, who opened the door in his bed-room for him. "Let the barge be ready in half an hour, and call a wherry up to the stairs at the end of the garden. See that all the men be warned that they will have to embark to-night on board the 'Mary Anne,' for Rotterdam."

The good man looked in his lord's face, and for a moment was inclined to ask,—“Has all been settled to your satisfaction?” but the expression of Algernon's countenance was answer sufficient; and, without a word, he retired to make the arrangements required. It is strange, the influence of the character of a master upon servants and dependants. There be some men, who, without any effort to conciliate or win regard, seem to command it; and their joys or sorrows diffuse themselves around, as it were in eddies, to the utmost limit of those who know them. A few words from the old servant, as he communicated his lord's commands to the rest of the household, spread gloom over the whole; and the attendants went about their preparations with a sad and sorrowful air, as if each had received some personal disappointment. At the end of half an hour, Algernon Grey issued forth from his chamber with several written papers in his hand. They were merely orders, which he was more inclined to write than to speak. The greater part of the attendants were to accompany him to Germany; but were to wait where they were an hour or two for the return of his barge, which was now ready to convey him, with six or seven whom he had selected, to a vessel about to sail for the mouth of the Rhine. The rest were to remain in London till they heard farther. Some stores of arms, not yet ready, were to be sent after him to Germany in another vessel. Especial care was ordered to be taken of his tenantry, and of two or three old pensioners of the family; and, according to a laudable custom of that time, which the law of

Elizabeth had not altogether abrogated, a certain sum was to be distributed in weekly alms to any deserving poor.

Several of his principal servants delayed his departure for a short time by asking directions in various matters which he had not remembered; but ere an hour and a half had passed after he had quitted the palace, he was floating on the broad bosom of the Thames; and, in about half an hour after, had embarked for Rotterdam. His followers showed zealous punctuality in joining him without delay. Baggage and arms were embarked safely; and, with the first tide that night, the ship dropped down the river. The passage could hardly be called fair, for it blew a gale from river-mouth to river-mouth; but the wind was favourable, and speed was all he cared for.

Often he asked himself, however, why he should so eagerly press forward; what but pain and grief lay before him; what had he to communicate to her he best loved, but doubt, uncertainty, and disappointment? and yet the thought of seeing her again, of holding her hand in his—of gazing into those beautiful, unspeakable eyes—of reading their love, and hope, and confidence—of gaining new trust for the future from her very look, drew him onward, and formed at least one bright spot in the future, which all the cares and sorrows that surrounded him had no power to cloud. Then, again, at times, he would revolve all that had taken place in England since he had again visited his native land, and he would ask himself, with doubt, whether all had been fair in the conduct of those who professed themselves his friends, and pretended to support his cause. Whether Buckingham was sincere,—whether Prince Charles himself had not been deceiving him? and then he would accuse himself of mean suspicions, and try to cast them from his mind. There was one point, indeed, on which the more he thought, the more he doubted. Had the Lady Catherine's family, though affecting to urge the nullification of the marriage, really exerted themselves to the utmost. They were powerful; in high favour at court, and yet he could not but remember that the contract between the lady and himself, while both were mere children, had been first proposed by the very uncle with whom she now lived,—a man not very pure in morals, and ambitious in character. Ere he reached the shores of Holland he resolved to take one step more, to write to the Lady Catherine herself, and telling her he had done all he could to set her free from an engagement she detested, leave her to move her own relations to exert themselves more strenuously than before. He would trust the letter, he thought, to his old servant and the page,—the one having many friends in the household to which he was sent, from whom he was sure to learn much of the past; the other being of a character almost too remarking, who would form a very sure notion of the disposition of all parties present. He gave them no orders, indeed, to inquire or to observe, but simply sent them back to England with the letter, as soon as his foot touched shore, desiring them to obtain an answer, and hasten to join him at Heidelberg.

The voyage up the Rhine, in those days, was slow and difficult; but for some way the strife

that was then actually going on in the Low Countries deterred him from landing; and it was only when he reached the first state of the Protestant Union that he disembarked with his followers, and took his way forward on horseback. Many difficulties and impediments delayed him on the road; and rumours continually reached him of the movements of contending armies in the Palatinate, some true, and many false. He gathered, however, from all accounts, that the temporary prosperity which had visited the arms of the King of Bohemia had by this time passed away; that Mansfeld had retreated into Alsace; that the Prince of Orange had been recalled to Holland; that greater discord than ever reigned among the united princes, and that Horace Vere and his troops, nearly confined to the town of Mannheim and its immediate neighbourhood, could effect little or nothing against a superior force led by one of the first generals of the age. Tilly, with the united Bavarian, Austrian, and Spanish armies, ranged and ravaged the Palatinate without check. Francken-thal, indeed, resisted still; but there was no power in the open field to protect the villages from oppression, or to maintain the smaller towns against the invader. Every report he received was more or less gloomy; and by some it was stated that Heidelberg itself was menaced; while others represented that the city was already invested.

All these accounts but served to make the young Englishman press more eagerly forward. The men, as well as their horses, were wearied with the rapid advance; but they did not complain, for they all comprehended the feelings in their lord's bosom, and there was sufficient of chivalry even in the lower classes of that day, to make them think it would be hard that he should be kept from the lady whom he loved simply because they were tired. Thus, on the ninth day after they had reached Rotterdam, they entered the dominions of the Elector Palatine; and after a weary march through the plains of the Rhine, with no intelligence but vague rumours amongst the peasantry, they reached, towards nightfall, a large village about eight miles from Mannheim, and somewhat more from Heidelberg. During the last day's journey, sad traces of the ravages of war had been apparent at every step. Villages burnt, houses and churches in ruins, and here and there a dead body lying unburied within a few yards of the road, had marked the devastating course; but the village that they now approached seemed to have escaped better than most of those they had met with; and a barricade drawn across the end of the little street showed that it had been prepared for defence by one or other of the contending parties. A number of the peasantry, armed with heavy arquebuses, presented themselves to the eyes of Algernon Grey just within the barricade; and a loud call to halt and keep off was almost instantly followed by two or three unceremonious shots, which, luckily, did not take effect. Bidding his men retire a little, the young Englishman rode on alone, and was suffered to approach the barrier; but, though he spoke to the peasants in German, begging shelter and repose for at least a few hours, his foreign accent created suspicion; and, with a sagacious shake of the

head, the leader of the peasantry told him that they knew better.

"Well, my brave man," answered Algernon Grey, "you seem to be frightened by a very small number; I have not thirty men with me in all; and, if I were an enemy, it would be much more dangerous for me to trust myself within your place than for you to let me in; however, if I must ride on to Heidelberg with weary men and horses, it cannot be helped; but you are not serving your Prince, I can tell you; for I am one of the King's officers, and was with him in Prague."

"Heidelberg!" said the peasant; "I doubt that you will get in. Whom do you want in Heidelberg?"

"Either Colonel Herbert or the Baron of Obertraut," answered the young Englishman.

"The Baron of Obertraut!" said the good man, eyeing the other from head to foot; "you may find him without going to Heidelberg; perhaps sooner than you like, if you be what I think."

"Whatever you may think," answered Algernon Grey, "I cannot find him sooner than I should like."

"Well, then, I will send for some one to show you where he is," replied the peasant. "It is not far; and he has two hundred good Reiters with him." Thus saying, he turned to the people who surrounded him, and whispered a word to a light, active lad. The latter instantly laid down his arquebuss and ran full speed up the village.

"The Baron is in the place, my good friend," said Algernon Grey at once. "I understand it all; so you can have no objection to open your barrier and let me in alone to speak with him."

But the worthy peasant was a very cautious man, and he would not venture even upon so safe a step till, in about five minutes, Obertraut himself was seen coming down the street on foot; the next moment Algernon's hand was grasped within his. The men were brought into the village and obtained some scanty refreshment; and in the mean time, while night fell rapidly, the two gentlemen walked up and down before the church in eager conversation. Algernon Grey now learned that Tilly, reinforced by a large detachment from the army of the Archduke, had been for the last three days drawing nearer and nearer to Heidelberg, evidently with the intention of besieging that city.

"He has not men enough to invest it entirely," said Obertraut; "but, alas! there are too few in the place to defend it long against the force he has."

"Then I will go on to-night," answered Algernon Grey; "under such circumstances every arm is something."

"Your men may indeed give assistance," said the young Baron; "mine are only accustomed to the open field and their horses' backs; therefore they can be of more service without than within. I will give you escort, however, as far as Neuenheim; for the way is not without danger."

"Where does Tilly lie?" asked Algernon Grey. "It would take a large force to close all communication with the town."

"The last news showed all his foot at Rehr-

bach," answered Obertraut, "and his horse scattered about by Wiesloch, Russloch, and Wieblingen. There are few parties, if any, on this side of the Neckar; but they cross from time to time, especially at night; so that it will be better that I and my people should go with you. We may, perhaps, gain some advantage by the way."

In the latter expectation, however, Obertraut was disappointed. The whole forces of the Bavarian general remained on the other side of the Neckar; and Algernon and Obertraut, with their several forces, reached Neunheim without seeing any human beings, except a few of the unfortunate peasantry, who fled across the fields as soon as they heard the sound of horses' feet.

Furnished with the pass-word, Algernon Grey presented himself at the gates of the bridge, and was immediately recognised by the officer on guard, who had seen him before at Prague. The news spread amongst the soldiery of a reinforcement having come to the aid of the garrison; the word passed from mouth to mouth over the bridge and into the city. Some of the boys and the students, who were loitering about, took it up; a little crowd collected, gathering as it went, and accompanied the English party with loud cheers to the gates of the castle. The sounds reached Agnes Herbert, as she sat sad and lonely in her own chamber; and, with the presentiment of love, a glow spread over her cheek; a thrill passed through her whole frame; and, leaning her head upon her hand, she wept under the struggle of hope and fear. Some time passed by, however; and every thing remained quiet and sad; for Algernon Grey had been, in the first instance, led to the apartments of the governor, Mervin, which lay in a distant part of the castle. Hope gave way to apprehension; "I have deceived myself," she thought; "it is not he! The place will be invested; and he will not be able to force his way in;" but at the end of half an hour there were rapid steps heard coming along the corridor. She knew her father's foot; but there was another, too, the tread of which was hardly less familiar to her ear. Joy overpowered her more than sorrow had ever done. She could not rise—she could not move from her chair, but, with her eyes raised, her hands clasped, her bosom heaving with the quick, short breath of expectation, she gazed towards the door. The next moment there was a light knock; she had hardly strength to say, "Come in;" but, whether he heard the words or not, Herbert threw it open and drew back to let her lover pass in first.

What a painful thing is the struggle between the natural feelings of the heart and the conventional modes of life! Had Agnes given way to what she felt, she would have sprung to Algernon's arms and poured forth her love upon his bosom; but she dared not; and, rising with timid grace, her cheek flushed with emotion, and eyes in which the tears would scarcely be restrained, she glided forward, with her fair hand extended.

He took it and pressed his hands upon it warmly, tenderly, eagerly; but she remarked at once that there was a melancholy shade

upon his brow, a look of sadness in his eyes. What could it mean? she asked herself. A letter, received ten days before, breathed nothing but hope and joyful expectation; it had told of difficulties overcome, of all obstacles removed, of a clear course towards love, and union, and happiness. Whence could that sadness proceed, then? It must arise from the dangerous position of the town; from the thoughts of the approaching siege; from a knowledge of the weakness of the garrison; from the apprehension of danger to those he loved; from any thing—any thing, Agnes was willing to believe, but new obstacles, fresh barriers having risen up between him and her. Every thing but that was light to her. Perils she feared not; privations she was ready to endure; but upon the thought of disappointed love she dared not suffer her mind to dwell even for a moment.

No time, however, was given for explanation; for, after a very few words had been spoken, Herbert took her lover's arm, saying, "There, my dear child, I was resolved that you should see our friend safe and well; but now I must go to visit the new redoubt I am throwing up behind the Altes Schloss; for it must be carried on night and day; and he has promised to go with me."

Thus saying, he turned to the door; but Algernon Grey lingered yet for a moment, saying, in a low voice, "I must find a moment to speak with you alone to-morrow, dearest Agnes. Matters do not proceed so quickly as I could wish, but all will go well, I trust."

The door closed upon them, and Agnes Herbert sank into her seat again, and sadly covered her eyes with her hand. Oh, how often in life is the long looked-for moment of joy alloyed by bitter disappointment!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE wind was from the west, the grey morning dawning calm, and somewhat hazy. Few eyes were open in the castle of Heidelberg, except those of the sentinels on the walls; and amongst those who slept soundest, strange to say, was Algernon Grey. He was wearied with long exertion and fatigue; he was wearied with anxiety and thought; he was wearied with several months' strife between hope and fear; and now, when a brief period of repose had come, when there seemed a pause in his fate, when no exertion on his part could advance or retard whatever events Fate had in store for the future, he slept profoundly, for many hours dreamlessly, till, towards the morning, faint and fleeting visions of Agnes Herbert in danger and distress crossed his mind, changing like the forms of clouds borne over the summer sky. Suddenly something, he knew not what, awoke him from his sleep, and he gazed round bewildered. For an instant he knew not where he was; but then he heard a faint and distant sound like that of a slowly beaten drum, and he murmured, "Surely that is the noise of firearms." Starting out of bed, he flung on a loose furred dressing-gown, and threw open the door of the anteroom. His servants were already

up; the outer door was open, and a man was looking out.

"What is that noise, Stephen Graves?" exclaimed the young Earl, anxiously. "Run and gain intelligence."

"They say it is the enemy, my lord," replied the man, "who have attacked the redoubt called the Ape's Nest, and the new trench you went to last night. Colonel Herbert has hurried up already; but I will soon get farther news;" and away he ran.

It was the first act of the siege; and Algernon Grey, while he armed himself in haste, felt that strange sort of impression which is ever produced by the commencement of any great and decisive transaction long delayed and expected, in which we are destined to bear a part. The siege of Heidelberg had begun. How was it to end? he asked himself. What might be the fate of himself and of those he held most dear, ere the final scene of the tragedy then commencing? But although deep reflection and strong feeling were inherent in his character, yet energetic activity was the predominant quality of his nature. Thought never made him pause or hesitate; and, as no particular post as yet had been assigned to him, he resolved at once to hasten as a volunteer to the point assailed, and render the best service in his power. His men were speedily gathered together, and the arms of the soldiers of that period were caught up and donned; when, just as they were descending to the court, the loud, dull boom of a piece of ordnance was heard, and a cannon-ball struck the wall above, and some heavy pieces of stone fell down across the windows.

"They have won the redoubt, my lord," said one of the men, pausing, and turning round to speak to Algernon Grey.

"Never mind," answered the young nobleman; "it can be won back again. Come on;" and, passing to the head of the troop, he led them down into the court, and through what was called the fore-yard of Louis the Fifth's palace, by a passage which led by the side of the library-tower to the upper casement, and to the conduit-casement; thence through the kitchen gardens and the pheasant garden, out to the mount-fort, where the new trench commenced. As they went, another and another cannon-shot was heard; and the balls whistled high over their heads towards the castle and the town. Several soldiers were met hurrying back towards the fortress; and two of them, carrying on their arms a wounded man, paused, at once to rest themselves for an instant, and to tell their advancing comrades that the Ape's Nest and the new trench were carried by the enemy.

Algernon Grey made no long halt, however, but hurried on to the southern entrance of the small octagonal fort, where he found Colonel Herbert directing a furious fire from two small pieces of cannon and about fifty arquebuses, upon the trench running up from the half-finished redoubt.

"Ah! my noble friend!" he cried, as soon as he saw the Earl; "this is kind help, and much needed. They have attacked us sooner than we thought, driven out the masons and the few soldiers who were working there; and, worse than all, captured all the beavers which

the peasants had gathered up here for the supply of the castle."

"Methinks we can retake the trench and the redoubt," said Algernon Grey, gazing forth, and shading his eyes with his hand from the light of the eastern sun, "perhaps even recapture the cattle; for that is a serious loss. Cover us with a sharp fire, and I will undertake to regain the works with my own men, provided there be not strong reinforcements beyond that wood."

"None, none," replied Herbert; "they have not three companies on the ground."

"Upon them, then!" cried Algernon Grey. "Stephen Graves, array the men before that little gate below—quick! for they are coming along the trench. Now, my gallant friend, let your fire be directed beyond that little mound of earth in the trench till we reach it, and then cease. You can send out a party to support us if you see need and have men enough. If you put some small balls into that falconet and brought it to sweep the trench, it would cover us well—jam them down close, or you will burst the gun."

Thus saying, the young nobleman ran down to his men below, and, ere the cannon he had pointed to could be charged, was seen issuing forth with his men into the trench. The Spaniards and Bavarians were gathering fast beyond musket-shot in the other end of the trench, prepared to rush forward to the attack of the octagon fort, and presented a firm front across the trench, jostling against men with their arms and steel caps glittering in the sun. But two guns besides the falconet had been brought to bear upon the trench from above, and Herbert himself, ordering the cannoniers to pause, aimed the falconet with a keen and experienced eye, and then adjusted one of the other pieces of ordnance. He had not time to give his own attention to the other; for Algernon Grey put his men into the charge; and, with sharp pikes lowered, the sturdy Englishmen rushed on. They were not two hundred yards from their opponents, and the word to meet them at the same place had been given to the Bavarian infantry, when the report of three guns from the fort, discharged rapidly one after the other was heard. One ball tore through the close ranks of Tilly's soldiers like a hurricane through a forest, laying a number of strong men low in a moment; another struck the edge of the trench beside them and covered the Bavarians with earth and rubbish; and in the midst of the confusion that followed, a shower of half-pound shot, fitted for what was then called the wall-petronel, completed the disarray. Then came the firm charge of the English, and in a minute or two the trench was swept from end to end, and Algernon Grey and his men rushed with the scattered enemy into the redoubt of the Ape's Nest which had been taken an hour before. Here, however, the struggle became more fierce; for a company of Spanish foot, fresh and in good order, advanced to cover the flight of their allies; the Bavarians rallied behind them, and for a few minutes Algernon with thirty men had to contend with a force of five times that number. The English, however, had the impulse of attack and success with them; the half-completed mounds of the redoubt afforded the enemy no shelter;

the first shock drove the Spaniards back, though still in fair array; and ere they could recover their ground, Herbert himself and a party of Palatinate troops poured in and completed the victory.

In rout and confusion the adversaries' forces were driven down the slopes of earth which had been thrown up, and fresh troops arriving from the castle and the fort, the pursuit was continued so sharply that neither Spaniards nor Bavarians had time to rally. Flying in confusion, some towards the Wolfswell, some towards Königstuhl, a number were slain by those who followed them, and some way beyond a small wood which was then called the Cammerwald, the whole drove of oxen which had been carried off in the morning was recaptured, and the poor herds who had been made prisoners liberated.

A halt of the Palatinate troops was then ordered, for no one knew where the chief force of Tilly was posted, and to both Herbert and Algernon Grey it seemed impossible to conceive that so experienced a commander would have suffered so small a force as that which had attacked the redoubt to advance far without support.

"You go back with the man to the fort," said the young nobleman after some consultation, "I will proceed with a small party to reconnoitre, and bring you intelligence soon."

Algernon Grey sent but did not bring intelligence; for with efforts of the mind, as with those of the body, it is not always possible to check a strong impulse at once. A man runs towards a particular object; but unless something arrests his progress, he is sure to run beyond it; and finding no large body of the enemy within sight, after having gone more than a mile in the direction of the position Tilly was reported to occupy the night before, the young Englishman was led on to reconnoitre further. Guided by one of the soldiers of the castle, whom Herbert had given him as a companion, and followed by eight or ten men, he glided through the woods upon the Königstuhl, taking advantage of every rocky point to examine accurately the ground below, and not even satisfied with the knowledge thus obtained, he determined to descend and approach as close as possible to Rohrbach and Wiesloch, where the enemy's principal force of infantry was supposed to be quartered. The ground, which is at present covered with vineyards climbing half way up the hill, was then shaded with thick woods; and under shelter of their branches, at that season in full leaf, the young Englishman approached to within about a quarter of a mile of Rohrbach, where the orchards and plum gardens rested upon the verge of the forest. Pausing on a small spur of the hill, which the guide called the Badger's haunt—I know not by what name it goes now-a-days—Algernon Grey leaned against one of the large oaks, and gazed down below, hearing some voices evidently speaking, not far off. Some clouds had come over the sun; and for a moment he could not discover the persons who were speaking; but moving a little to one side, while the sun shone out at the same time, the glittering of a steel cap caught his eyes, and the white head-gear of a country girl. Another

slight change of position showed him a Bavarian sentinel, talking with a young woman of the Palatinate; and, to say truth, making somewhat warmer love than is common with his countrymen of the present day. Turning round to his companions with a smile, he very heartily proposed to carry off the poor sentinel from his present relaxation, in order to obtain at leisure whatever information he could afford. No great difficulties presented themselves to the undertaking; for the man had been placed to guard a little hollow way leading up into the wood, and had wandered a few steps from his post in order to enjoy the conversation of his fair friend unobserved. On the other side was a plum-garden, fenced by a stone wall, with a break in it; and, dividing his men into two parties, Algernon Grey, with four companions, glided quietly down the hollow way under cover of the bank; while the other party crept on into the plum-trees, till they reached the break. The soldier had laid down his arquebuse for a moment or two; and, ere he could recover it, which he attempted to do, at the first sound of a footfall, he was seized; and, with a pistol at his head and an injunction to keep silence, was dragged up into the woods.

Without pausing to question him at the time, lest the woman, who had been left behind, should give the alarm, the young Englishman took his way back to the castle, through different paths from those by which he had gone forth; but the whole day had been consumed in these proceedings, and the sun was setting when he reached the small fort at the Ape's-nest. Herbert was no longer there. The soldiers in the redoubt declared that all had passed quietly; and the reconnoitring party proceeded in the twilight to the castle, where their long absence had caused some uneasiness, although a messenger had been sent about midnight to say that no great movement could be observed in the enemy's forces.

The examination of the prisoner took place immediately; and from his answers it was found that the report was general in Tilly's camp, that the siege would be regularly commenced on the following day; and that the principal point of attack would be the Ape's-nest, and the high ground around it. A road had been prepared, the man said, for transporting the artillery; and several large pieces of ordnance had that very day been carried a considerable way up the mountain, with less difficulty than had been anticipated.

Thus passed the first day after Algernon Grey's return to Heidelberg, and in the whole course thereof he did not obtain more than half an hour of the society of her he loved, nor was that without the drawback of the presence of many others, as they sat at supper in Colonel Herbert's tower.

Ten persons were assembled round the table at a late hour, comprising Mervin, the general governor of the place, and the principal officers of the German, English, and Dutch troops; and though placed next to Agnes, with Mervin between her and her father, yet but a few words could pass between unheard by all. Algernon Grey, however, did not lose the opportunity, but whispered in a low tone, while the conversation was going on loud around, "Come down

hither, dear girl, early to-morrow, ere your father goes forth; I wish to speak with you both; for, in the dangers which are approaching, there should be no doubt on any part — nothing unexplained — no hesitation, no fear."

Agnes merely bowed her head, for, at the moment Algernon concluded, the governor addressed her on the other side, and all private communication between her and her lover was over for the night.

At eleven o'clock the party rose, and most of the guests retired, but Mervin, ere he went, took both Herbert's hands frankly in his, saying, "There is something on my mind, my noble friend, and as we shall all soon be at hard blows with the enemy, I cannot go into the strife without saying it. By every right you should have the command here, and I am sure Horace Vere was not aware that you had made up your mind to stand the brunt of this siege after having fought so well in other places, or he would have offered it to you; but let us divide our labours and our authority. Take which you will for your own particular post, the castle or the town. I will take the other, and we can hold council together upon all great affairs."

Herbert turned away his head for a moment, but left his hand in Mervin's, and then, returning the friendly pressure, he said, "The castle for me. It has been my dwelling for many a year. I have bestowed much pains in strengthening it. It has become a sort of plaything to me—a pet, a favourite, and I would fain stand by it while it stands, or perish with it."

"So be it, then," answered the other. "I will defend the town, and do not think of either letting it fall or perish. No gloomy anticipations, Herbert. We will try, at least, to repel the enemy, and doubt not we shall succeed, and all live to remember our united efforts with pride and satisfaction."

Herbert shook his head gravely, though it could not be called sadly. "It is all in God's hand, good friend," he said. "Death never strikes without authority."

"And God protects the right," answered Mervin; "so we will not doubt. I suppose, my lord, you will remain in the castle with your men; but come with me for a moment to my lodging ere you go to bed. I have some news for you from England, brought by a special messenger, since you left our native land, in a letter to Mannheim."

Algernon Gray's eyes lightened with fresh hopes; for love had wrought a change in him; and, whereas he had long given way to despondency, the tendency of his mind had now become hopeful. As soon as they reached the governor's lodging, Mervin put a letter in his hand, signed Horace Vere, and pointed to a particular passage, "Tell the Earl of Hillingdon," so the paragraph ran, "that I have news from the Duke of Buckingham, of the third of this month: he states that there is good hope for the Earl in his cause. The new favourite is getting out of favour, has absented himself from the Royston party without the King's leave, and has been roughly handled in discourse. These advantages improved may remedy all that has gone amiss in the Earl's

cause; and Buckingham declares that he may trust to him and the Prince for the result."

Such were the tidings which sent Algernon Gray to rest with a heart somewhat relieved; but still many an anxious apprehension crossed his mind, and kept him waking for more than an hour.

He resolved, however, to lose no time in communicating to Colonel Herbert the exact position in which he stood. To Agnes's uncle he might not have felt himself bound by the same rules which affected him towards her father; but he determined, whatever might be the result, he would not keep the parent of her he loved in ignorance of the exact situation in which he was placed.

All such resolutions—indeed, all human resolutions—are the sport of circumstances; and, in the present case, he could not perform that which he had determined to do. Early on the following morning, he knocked at the door of the English officer's saloon; it was the sweet voice of Agnes that bade him enter; and her first intelligence was that her father had already gone forth to the outworks.

"I told him," she said, "that you wished to see him, that you had something to communicate to him of importance: nay, that it referred to me and my happiness; but he would not stay. He replied, that the defence of the place was the first thing to be thought of; that he did not wish his mind to be distracted from his task by any other considerations; that he trusted entirely to my own judgment and feelings; and that, whatever I promised he would confirm. I think he mistook the nature of the communication you had to communicate, Algernon; that he thought it simply a matter of form; but yet I could not make up my mind to press it upon him; for when excited by such events as are now taking place, he is impatient of any opposition, and gives his whole heart and soul entirely up to what he considers to be his duty as a soldier. Whatever you have to tell, I do think it will be better to reserve it till this siege is over, or at least till we are compelled by other circumstances."

"First hear what it is," replied Algernon Gray, "and then judge; for I must not have him say at a future period, that I acted dishonourably by him;" and he proceeded to relate all the events that had occurred to him while absent in England. He showed her that he had formally applied for the nullification of the marriage, to which he had been a hardly conscious party in his boyhood; that no opposition had been made, but a similar petition addressed to the courts by the lady Catherine herself; that, after some difficulties, all obstacles had been swept away; and that nothing had been required but his oath, corroborated by other testimony, that he had not seen the lady since she was ten years old; that having gone to England to prove the fact, the judges appointed had come to a unanimous decision; and that his expectations and hopes were raised to the highest pitch, when suddenly the King had interfered, and forbidden the sentence from being promulgated. The causes which were supposed to have led to this tyrannical conduct on the part of James, he could not fully detail to ears so pure as those which heard him; but

he bated that a new favourite of the monarch's had been the moving cause, from some base motives of his own; and that he had good hope of this new and painful obstacle being speedily removed.

Agnes listened attentively, in deep, sad thought. She asked no questions, for she feared that if she did, the bitter disappointment that she felt would show itself too plainly. When he had done, however, after a short pause, to assure herself of her self-command, she replied,—"I think still, Algernon, it will be better not to press the subject upon him. He cannot say that you have deceived him, when you have sought to tell him all, and he himself has declined to hear; and I know that such tidings, and the doubts they would inspire of my fate and happiness, would agitate and disturb him terribly."

"There is another course, dear Agnes," answered her lover, "and that I will take. I will write the whole facts down, and give the paper to him. He can read it or not, if he likes; but I must not fail on any point where you, dear girl, are concerned. I will go and do it directly, and take the very first moment of putting the statement in his hands."

As soon as he was gone Agnes gave way to tears, but they lasted not long, and her mind became more calm afterwards. On his part Algernon Grey hastened back to his own chamber and wrote, as he had proposed, stating the facts simply and straightforwardly, and pointing out that the decision of the judges being unanimous and upon record, though not published, the marriage must, sooner or later, be declared null. He then folded up the paper, sealed it, and hurried forth towards the outworks in search of Herbert. He met him ere he had gone a hundred yards, and the good old soldier grasped him frankly by the hand, saying, with a gay air, "I ran away from you this morning, my good friend; Agnes told me you wished to talk with me. I knew the subject was love; and I will have naught upon my mind, during this siege, but fighting. I trust fully to her and to you, my noble friend; and, as you cannot be married till all this business is over, we can talk of it hereafter, if we both survive. If I die, you must supply my place to her under another name—is it not so?"

"I will," answered Algernon, pressing his hand in his; and Herbert continued with a graver air, "If you fall, Agnes's heart—and I know it well—will be a widowed one, and remain so to her grave. This is all that is needful to say for the present."

"Nay," answered Algernon Grey, "though I would not press the subject upon you, as you dislike it, yet I must not leave you without information on any point when you choose to seek it. I have written down some facts which, I believe, you ought to know, in this packet. Take it and read it when you are disposed and have leisure. I must never have you suppose, my gallant friend, that I do not deal frankly with you in all things."

"I never will," answered Herbert, taking the letter and gazing at it with a smile,—"I will put this safely by, where it will rest undisturbed for a month to come, if this Bavarian do not press his operations more speedily than he is

doing at present. No fresh attack has been made; we have finished the redoubt and planted some guns there; but there are defects in the whole position both of castle and town, which I only hope he is not wise enough to understand. Hark! there is a trumpet blowing at the gate—a summons, I suppose; let us go and see."

It proved to be not exactly as he supposed; for Tilly's envoy, on being admitted to the presence of Mervyn and Herbert, did not formally demand the surrender of the place. The import of the message was, that the Bavarian general desired to confer with the governor of Heidelberg at any place that he would appoint; a truce being agreed upon for the time. A resolute answer was returned, to the effect that such a proposal was quite inadmissible, and that any farther communication that might be required, must take place with Sir Horace Vere, general in chief of the Palatine forces.

Scarcely had the trumpeter and the two commissioners, by whom he was accompanied, retired, when a sharp cannonade was heard from the north-east; and when Herbert and his companion hastened to the pheasant garden, they found that the newly constructed redoubt was in possession of the enemy, and that the force by which the attacking party was supported left not the most remote chance of recovering the position lost. Such was the first event of importance in the siege of Heidelberg.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE cannon thundered from the Geisberg; and thick and fast the cannon-balls fell into the town and castle; but the distance was great, the science of projectiles little known; and for several days the damage done was of no great importance. Nearer and nearer, however, the Bavarian general pushed his approaches; and almost hourly news reached the city of fresh reinforcements having arrived in the enemy's camp, of some other point being assailed, or some other gate blockaded. No advantage, however, was gained against the place without a fierce and resolute contest. No sooner was a trench dug, than the foe were driven from it; no sooner was a fresh battery constructed, than a fierce and vigorous assault was made to wrest it from the hands of the enemies. Still, however, they advanced slowly but steadfastly. If they were driven back defeated one day, they gained somewhat more than they had lost the next; and with fresh troops continually pouring upon the spot assailed, they carried on the strife unceasingly; while the garrison of Heidelberg were too few in number to oppose anything like an effectual resistance; and retired every night utterly exhausted by the labours of the day.

Wherever the struggle was the most severe, there was Colonel Herbert and Algernon Grey; wherever the fire was the hottest, and the danger most imminent, there they were in the midst of it. The confidence of the soldiery was unbounded in those two commanders, especially towards the former, who, leading, encouraging, directing, inspired them by his example, and guided them by his experience; and although they saw that the Bavarian army daily made

some progress, yet they easily perceived that, if the resistance was carried on with such vigour, months must pass ere the town could be reduced; and the never silent voice of hope assured them, that ere then succour would arrive.

On the nineteenth of August, under a tremendous fire of all kinds of missiles, an assault was made on the Trutzkaiser, one of the principal defences of the town; and for nearly an hour and a half one storming party after another poured on relieving each other; but each was met and driven back with a degree of vigour and determination which the Bavarian general had not been led to expect from the terror and consternation which he knew his first approach had spread through the town. The citizens aided the soldiers; the soldiers encouraged the citizens; and not only were the assailants repulsed, but followed far beyond the defences, and many of them slaughtered between the walls and the main body of the Bavarian army.

Habit is a marvellous thing, familiarizing us with all that is most dreadful and abhorrent to our nature. At first the fall of each cannonball in the streets of the town, the destruction of a chimney, the carrying away of a buttress, spread a thrill of terror through the whole place. The inhabitants covered over the narrow streets with large sheets of linen to hide them from the eyes which they imagined were directing the messengers of death towards every one who was seen walking in the town. The fall of the place was looked upon as inevitable; and many of the burghers cursed in their hearts the garrison, whose resistance exposed them to a siege. There were others, however, and indeed the major part of those who had remained in the town, whose loyalty and devotion were of a firmer quality; and the spirit which animated them spread to almost all the rest, as soon as habit had rendered the ears of the townspeople familiar with the roar of the artillery. The death of a citizen by a shot from above then began to be spoken of as an unfortunate accident; and the man, who some days before would have run half a mile at the report of a cannon, only jumped a little on one side to avoid the falling stone-work, when a ball struck one of the buildings of the city close to him.

One person in the beleaguered place, however, could not be reconciled to the dangers of that siege. Personal fears she had none; she went out into the town; she visited the wounded and the sick in the hospitals; she passed along the most exposed streets and the paths under the immediate fire of the enemy; she comforted and supported the timid; she encouraged the resolute and strong-hearted; she spoke of resistance unto death, and loyalty that knew no termination but the grave. Wherever she came, her presence to the hardy man or the frightened woman was as that of a strengthening angel; and men turned to ask, "Who would have thought that fair Mistress Agnes Herbert, so gay, so gentle, and so tender, would ever have shown such courage and resolution!"

But in the solitude of her own chamber the heart of Agnes sank at the thunder of the cannonade, when she thought of those so dear exposed to hourly peril; and when a group of men were seen bearing a wounded or dying comrade

from the quarter where her father and her lover were engaged, a feeling of sickening apprehension would come over her; and often with faint steps she would hurry forth to see the face of the dying man. Then she would reproach herself for weakness, resolving, for the future, not to anticipate the evil day; and would prepare to cheer with bright smiles the return of weary friends, when the combat and the watch were over.

They needed all that could be done, indeed, to keep up their spirits in the contest that was going on; for day by day and hour by hour notwithstanding every effort of the garrison, notwithstanding an amount of courage on the part of the citizens which no one had anticipated, the enemy gained ground. To Herbert it was a bitter disappointment as well as grief; for calculating with the experience of long years of war, he felt sure, that when Tilly commenced the siege, the forces of the Bavarian general were inadequate to the task he had undertaken, and that Heidelberg could hold out for months, if it were defended as he was resolved it should be. But a few days after the siege commenced, fresh bodies of troops appeared where they had not been expected; a greater number of pieces of heavy ordnance, then had been in the Imperial camp on the fourteenth of August opened their fires on the town and castle on the nineteenth; and the report became rife, that the general of the besieging army had been reinforced by ten thousand men from the forces of the Archduke. The English officer became moody and desponding; and, though in the hour of danger and of combat he was full of fire and energy, filling the soldiers by his very look with courage and determination like his own, yet, when he returned to his lodging in the castle, he would fall into long fits of silence, gaze upon the ground with a gloomy eye, or pore over a plan of the defences, and sadly shake his head.

The operations of the siege were at first confined to the left bank of the Neckar; and the communication with the town from the right bank by the road over the covered bridge was unimpeded except by occasional parties of cavalry, who would pillage the peasantry, bringing in provisions, unless protected by a strong guard. The supply of the town, however, was facilitated by the exertions of the Baron of Oberntraut and his small force; and his very name had become so terrible to the Imperial troops, that the enemy's cavalry would withdraw in haste at the very first news of his approach. Often, indeed, he came upon them unawares like a quick thunderstorm; and almost daily news arrived in the city of this regiment of Croats, or that body of Cossacks, having been defeated by Oberntraut, and driven over the river in terror and confusion. He himself, however, never appeared within the walls till the month of September came in; and from the batteries above the Pheasant-garden a tremendous fire was kept up during the greater part of one whole day upon the defences of the castle and the town. The elements, too, on that morning seemed to fight on behalf of the enemy. One of the most awful tempests, that a land, prolific in storms, had ever witnessed, swept the valley of the Neckar. Lightning and hail filled the air. The thunder almost drowned the

cannonade; and about four o'clock, the wind, which had been rising for some time, increased to a perfect hurricane. Chimneys were blown down; houses were unroofed; men and women were killed in the streets by the falling masonry; and, in the midst of the terror and confusion, which this awful phenomenon created, the Bavarian general ordered a general assault to be made on the defences of the town and the castle. Mervin, about two-thirds of the garrison, and a large body of the armed citizens presented themselves to defend the place from

what was then called the Spire's gate, to where the walls of the town joined those of the castle. Herbert, with Algernon Grey, the Dutch troops, and the English volunteers, together with two hundred Palatinate infantry, undertook to repel the enemy in their attempt to storm the castle. The cannonade on both sides was tremendous, as the Imperial troops marched steadily to the assault; and from the top of the round tower at the angle of the great casemate, Colonel Herbert watched their approach, anxiously calculating to what point their efforts would be directed; while several inferior officers stood beside him to carry his orders to Algernon Grey and others who were in command of the troops in the outworks. Suddenly, as he stood and watched, he perceived the fire of several of the largest of the enemy's guns turned in the direction of the lower part of the town, and, as it seemed to him, upon the bridge; but, from the spot where he stood, he could not discover what was taking place in that part of the city. After a moment's consideration, he pointed with his hand towards the outworks which crossed the Pheasant-garden and the small battery on the mound at the angle, which commanded the trench towards the Ape's-nest, that had been lost in the early part of the siege.

"There will be the principal attack," he said, speaking to the officers near him. "Speed away, Wormser, to the troops, by the bath-house, and order them to detach fifty men to reinforce the battery. I must away to see what is going on down there; but I will join them in the Pheasant-garden in a few minutes."

"You will see best from the block-house, sir, by the Carmelite-wood, where the English volunteers are posted," said one of the officers who had marked the fire directed upon the lower part of the town; "I dare say the Earl can tell you what is going on."

Herbert made no reply, but hurried away as fast as he could go, seeing two more guns brought to bear upon the town, towards the river. As he hurried across the great casemate, and thence through the gardens, the balls fell thick about him from the lesser guns of the Bavarian batteries. Every moment some of the fine rare trees, collected from all parts of the world, at an enormous expense, crashed under the shot, or fell, torn asunder, strewing the ground with fruits and flowers, such as Europe seldom saw. The vice and the folly of unnecessary war, is never, perhaps, more strongly felt than when its destructive effects are seen amongst all the fair and beautiful objects which the peaceful arts have gathered or produced. But the thoughts and feelings of Herbert at that moment were those of the warrior alone: the thoughtful and contemplative man, which he

had appeared in calmer days, was cast away, and the lion was roused within him. The trees, in whose shade and in whose appearance he had delighted, he now cursed, for covering in some degree the approach of the enemy, and he would willingly have ordered them all to be swept away.

Turning the angle of the Pheasant-garden, he soon reached the block-house, where Algernon Grey, with his band of Englishmen, supported by a company of Dutch infantry, had been stationed, as soon as the preparations for an assault had been perceived; and as he reached the foot of the mound, the young Earl came down to meet him, asking, "Have you seen my messenger?"

"No," answered Herbert, quickly. "What news from below there!—they seem firing upon the bridge."

"The wind has carried off the roof of the bridge," said Algernon Grey, "and there is a great firing near the gate tower on the other side. One cannot well see what is taking place for the smoke and the tower; but fresh troops seem coming up from Neuheim and the plains."

Herbert set his teeth hard, but made no reply; and, mounting to the block-house, he gazed out, holding fast by an iron stanchion; for, on that high ground, it was scarcely possible to stand against the force of the hurricane. After a moment's consideration, he turned to his young countryman, saying in a low voice, "There is no one there we can trust. The fellow there is a coward, given that post because we thought it quite secure from attack. You will not be wanted here, Algernon. Take twenty men with you, and run down with all speed. Assume the command at once; if he resists, blow his brains out; and at all events, maintain the gate. If we lose the bridge, they will not be long out of the town."

Without a word the young nobleman obeyed, hurried down by the shortest paths, and passed through the deserted streets of the town, where no human being was to be seen but a wounded soldier crawling slowly back from the walls, and an officer, still more badly hurt, carried in the arms of three or four hospital men. He soon reached the Heidelberg side of the bridge, where he found the gates open, and the archway under the bither tower crowded with soldiery. From the other side of the Neckar, upon the bridge and the farther tower, was directed a terrible fire from a considerable body of Bavarian infantry with two small pieces of cannon; and from time to time the balls from the battery on the Geisberg passed over the bridge and dropped into the stream, without doing much damage, except to one of the nearer piers and the houses in the lower town; for it would seem that the Bavarian officers above were somewhat embarrassed by the position of their own men on the right bank of the river.

"Clear the way," cried Algernon Grey, "and, in Heaven's name, establish some order! There, Lauzpriade, array your men behind the gates, and keep ready to close and defend them, in case of need. Where is your commander!"

"God knows," answered the man, with a laugh; "we have not seen him for this hour. And Wasserstein and the rest over there are fighting as well as they can without orders."

"Well, I will command them," answered

Algernon Grey; and, advancing at the head of his men, he crossed the bridge towards the opposite gate. Just in the middle of the passage, a bullet through one of the windows of the bridge struck his corselet and glanced off, wounding a man behind; but the young Earl hurried on; and, forcing his way through the men crowded round the gate, mounted by the stone stairs to the top of the town, which was crowded by gallant fellows returning the fire of the enemy from every window and loop-hole. One man in particular, a burly-looking German, holding the rank, which we should now term sergeant, stood with his whole person exposed at the largest aperture, whilst two young lads behind him loaded and re-loaded a store of arquebuses, with which he busied himself in picking off the principal assailants, perfectly heedless of the shot, which sometimes passed through the window close to him, sometimes struck upon the stone-work, or lodged in the wood and tiles of the conical roof just above.

"You are Wasserstein," said Algernon Grey, laying his hand upon his shoulder. "I know you by your gallantry—let me look out for a moment, I want to see what is going on."

"One shot more, sir, at that man with the green plume," replied the man, who instantly recognised him. "We must make the best fight we can; but I think they are bringing up fresh guns; at least, I see horses there coming at a great pace."

Even while he was speaking he had been taking a quiet and deliberate aim; and the next instant the gun went off, and a Bavarian officer fell.

"There, that will do," said Wasserstein. "Now, sir, but don't be long."

Algernon Grey advanced to the window and gazed out. The next instant a shot grazed his face, shattered a part of his steel cap, and passed off; but he did not move an inch, and he could hear the man behind him murmur, "Ah! that is something like."

"Good news, my friend," said Algernon Grey: "that is Obertraut coming up in their rear. I know his cornet. I must go out to meet him. You had better come down and command at the drawbridge when it is let down for me to pass."

"I would rather go with you," said the man. "There is none here that I can trust but you," said Algernon Grey, laying his hand upon his arm. "You must stay to support me, in case of need."

"Well, I will, then," answered Wasserstein. "Fire away, my men, fire away! Don't give them a moment's rest: the young Englishman is going to cut their throats."

Descending to the gates, Algernon Grey addressed a few words to his men, arrayed them as with broad front as the space would permit, and, after a moment or two spent in preparation, that the enemy might be taken by surprise, the gates were thrown open, and the drawbridge lowered in an instant. With shortened pikes, and shoulder touching shoulder, the English band rushed across, with their young leader at their head, while every loop-hole of the tower poured forth shot upon the enemy. A number of men, with long planks to form a sort of temporary bridge, were right in the way; but seeing what seemed to be a considerable body

of the garrison rush forth to the charge, they dropped the timber and ran back upon the ranks, which were covering their approach, and threw the first line into confusion. The narrow road did not admit of a wide front to either party; and, assailed impetuously by the English pikemen, the front line of the Bavarians gave way, driving the second back upon those behind. A number fell; one or two on the left jumped down the bank into the Neckar; and confusion and disarray had spread panic amongst a body of several hundred men, before a mere handful of assailants, when the sharp galloping of horse was heard from beyond the turn of the road; and shots, and cries, and words of command sounded from the rear. A young officer of the Bavarian infantry made a gallant effort to rally his flying soldiers, but it was in vain; and, waving his sword in the air, Algernon Grey exclaimed, "On! on! gallant hearts. Obertraut is upon their rear. Push on for that gun. We must have one trophy at least."

The men answered with a cheer, and the next moment the cannon was in their hands. Up the slopes, amongst the rocks and orchards, down by the stream, up to their middles in water, the Bavarian troops fled without order; and the moment after, the young Earl could see the Palatinate horsemen dashing in amongst them, pursuing wherever the ground permitted it, and cutting them down without mercy. It was a wild and strange scene; and in the midst of it was seen Obertraut himself, without any of the defensive armour of the period, but habited merely with hat and plume, buff coat of untanned leather, and thick gloves and riding-boots.

"Obertraut! Obertraut!" cried Algernon Grey, as he came near; but Obertraut took no notice, dealing a blow here and there with his sword at the heads of the routed Bavarians, and riding on towards the bridge. Yet it was clear that he must have recognised the English party; for they had a Bohemian flag with them, they wore the Palatinate scarfs, and no blow was struck at any of them, although the road was so narrow that the young Earl was obliged to halt his men, and give them a different formation round the captured gun, in order to let the cavalry pass.

"He is heated, and impatient with the fight," thought Algernon Grey; and, without farther comment, he commanded his men to bring the gun, and the stores of ammunition that were with it, into the town, and returned towards the bridge, knowing that there was scarcely a part of the defences where the presence of every man, who could be spared from other points, was not necessary. The drawbridge was by this time down again, and the gates open; and, leaving the cannon in the hands of Wasserstein, the young Englishman hurried up with his men towards the block-house, where he had been first posted, remarking a tremendous fire from the right of the Pheasant-garden, and a dense smoke rising up from under a cavalier of late construction, still farther to the right. As he approached, the comparative quietness of everything towards the block-house, and in the park of the Friesenberg, showed him that an attack had been made in that quarter; and, turning to the right, through the narrow winding paths and

half-completed terraces of Solomon de Caus, he soon found himself at the entrance of the Pheasant-garden, and had a view of the outworks which had formed one of the principal points of attack. The fire seemed somewhat to have slackened; but the Palatinate troops were still ranged within the parapet, and a group of officers were seen standing near the centre of the platform, amongst whom Algernon Grey could remark the figure of Herbert, and, somewhat to his surprise, that of Oberntraut also. Herbert's face was turned away from the Bavarian batteries, and his attitude at once made the young Englishman say to himself, "The enemy have been repulsed." The next moment, he saw Oberntraut shake Colonel Herbert warmly by the hand, and descend the steps leading to the path immediately in front. The young Baron came on with a heavy brow, and eyes bent down, as if in deep thought, scarcely seeming to perceive the approaching party with the Earl at its head. Algernon stopped him, however, and took his hand, saying, "What is the matter, my friend!"

Oberntraut gazed in his face gravely, then suddenly returned his grasp warmly replying, "There is a great deal I do not understand; but I am sure you're honest—I am sure you are, and I have said so."

Without waiting for any answer, Oberntraut turned away and walked down the hill; and, murmuring to himself, "This is very strange," the young Earl advanced and mounted the steps to the top of the cavalier. There he saw the enemy in full retreat, carrying with them, apparently, a number of killed and wounded. Herbert was now at the farther side of the work; but, though he must have seen the young Englishman approach, he did not turn towards him; and when Algernon spoke, his reply, though not discourteous, was distant and cold.

"The assault has been repelled, my lord," he said; "and will not be renewed to-night; nevertheless, it may be as well to be prepared; and, therefore, I will beg you to command here in my absence, while I return for a while to the castle, whither I am called by business."

Algernon Grey was pained and surprised; but it was not a moment or a scene in which any explanation could be asked; and, saying merely, "Very well, I will do so," he turned to examine once more the retreating force of the enemy.

Herbert, in the mean time, descended into the Pheasant-garden; and, quickening his pace, as soon as he was under covering of the trees, he walked in the most direct line to his own lodging in the tower.

On opening the door he found Agnes watching for his return; and her face lighted up with joy, as soon as she beheld him; but a cloud came over it the next instant to see him return alone, which had seldom happened of late.

"Oh, my dear father," she cried; "I am glad to see you back uninjured. This has been a terrible day—but where is Algernon? Is he hurt?" and here her voice sunk almost to a whisper.

"No, my child," answered Herbert, gravely; "he is safe and well, and has done his devoir gallantly;" and, putting her gently aside, he advanced to a small cabinet on the other side

of the circular room, unlocked a drawer, and took out a sealed letter, which he instantly broke open and commenced reading. Agnes remarked that his hand trembled, which she had never seen in her life before. When he had done, he seated himself and leaned his head upon his hand in thought.

"Agnes, my love," he said at length; "this place is no place for you. The dangers are too great, the scenes are too terrible. I must send you to Louisa Juliana till the siege is over."

"Oh, no, no," cried Agnes; "I cannot, I will not leave you."

"Hush!" said Herbert; "you must go; your presence here unnerves me. I will send of a messenger early to-morrow morning to the Electress to know if you can be safe with her. He can be back in two days; and then you must go. Your stay here and all the risks would drive me mad."

Agnes bent down her head and wept; but Herbert's determination came too late. Before the following evening a large force of Imperial infantry and several pieces of cannon crossed the Neckar by the bridge at Ladenburg, and were brought round to the opposite side of the bridge. The town was thus completely invested; and, although not cut off from all communication with the country without, the obstacles that presented themselves were such as Herbert would not willingly expose his daughter to encounter.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

On an evening at the end of summer, while leaves were yet green and skies yet full of sunshine, though the long daylight of the year's prime had diminished somewhat more than an hour, and darkness and winter were stealing slowly forward in the distance, a small but handsome room, richly furnished with everything that the taste of that day could display, with exquisite carvings of old oak, with fine pictures, with velvet hangings, ay, and with green shrubs and flowers, both rare and beautiful, showed preparations for a supper-party, at which two persons only were expected. The table was arranged with great taste: rich fruits, in a silver vase, formed a pyramid in the midst; and two or three dishes, of the most beautiful workmanship, presented various tempting pieces of confectionery strewn over, in quaint devices, and in a regular pattern, with minute flowers. On the right of the principal table, at some little distance, was a carved oak buffet, covered with crimson velvet, just seen from beneath the edges of a damask napkin, on which were arranged some large silver tankards of beautiful forms, two golden goblets, and several tall glasses gilded on the stem. The windows of the room were open, but shaded with trees and flowering shrubs, and a green soft light spread through the interior, as the rays of the setting sun poured through the veil of leaves. That light began to assume a purple hue, showing that the orb of day had touched the verge of the horizon, when a lady entered by a door from the gardens, magnificently habited in an evening dress, with somewhat more display of her fair person than the general habits of the

English people rendered decorous. We see the same mode of dress in the pictures of Rubens, especially those in which he represents the court of France at that period; but the costume had not yet become general in Great Britain, and, to English minds, the dress might have been higher, the wing-like collar more close. The lady closed the door and locked it; looked eagerly round, advanced to the other door, and did the same. Then, taking a small vial from that fair bosom, and a plate from the table, she poured out of the little bottle a white powder into the centre of the plate. There was a little vase of silver standing near, filled with powdered sugar, and from it she took a portion with a small silver ladle, then mingled the sugar and the white powder in the plate intimately together, and sprinkled the confectionery thickly with the mixture. This done, she again glanced round, looked out through both the windows, replaced the little vial in her bosom, and then unlocking either door, went forth again.

The room remained vacant for half an hour; twilight succeeded to broad day, and night to twilight, but soft and fair; no heavy darkness, but a gentle transparent shade, with the starlight and the coming moon, felt though not seen, within the chamber. The windows remained open; the soft air sighed in through the branches, and a solitary note of the long-singing merle was heard every now and then from beneath the leaves.

Suddenly the quick hoofs of a number of horses sounded on the road near, then stopped, and voices talking gaily in the house succeeded. Two servants entered that carefully decked room, and lighted the candles in the lustres. A moment after, a man, in a white cap and apron, followed, looked over the whole table, moved some of the flowers upon the dishes, but the cook did not seem to remark that aught had been done to his confectionery.

"Ods life, there are more of them coming," he cried, addressing the other two servants, as the tramp of more horses was heard; "I wish they would keep their hungry throats away. Run out, Lloyd, and see who are these new ones."

The room was left vacant again for a few minutes, and then the door was thrown open by one of the attendants. The lady entered, leaning somewhat languishingly on the arm of a tall, handsome young man, splendidly dressed, but yet without that air of high birth and courtly habits which were eminently conspicuous in his fair companion.

A slight degree of paleness spread over the lady's face as she passed the threshold, and the deep fringed eyelids dropped over the large black eyes. The gentleman's look was upon her at the moment, and his brow somewhat contracted; his countenance assumed an expression of shrewd and bitter meaning. He said naught, however; and the lady, recovering herself in a moment, turned her head, saying to the servant behind, "Let the men wait—tell the boy I will see him, and receive his lord's letter after supper."

"Who are these men?" asked the gentleman, advancing with her towards the table.

"The page of the Earl of Hillingdon, my good lord," she replied, with a sarcastic smile,

seating herself in the nearest chair; "his page and a servant, bearing a letter from that noble gentleman to poor deserted me."

"Nay, not much deserted," cried the other, in a gallant tone, "when my heart and so many others are at your feet."

"Hush!" she said sharply, though in a low voice, "nothing of this before the servants."

As she spoke a dish was brought in, and handed first to her guest; but he would be extremely courteous that night, and ordered it to be carried to her. She took some at once, and ate without noticing his attention, but saying aloud, as he helped himself, "I am but a poor housekeeper, my good lord, and am sorry my noble uncle is not here to treat you better; but I told the cook to do his best, and show his skill."

"Oh, this is excellent!" replied the gentleman, "and will make up for my bad fare yesterday at Hertford, where everything was so bitter methought I was poisoned. The taste is in my mouth still."

"Nay, we must drive it thence with better things," said the lady. "I would not deny myself the pleasure of receiving you, when you wrote to say you would come, though my uncle was absent; and I must try to make up for your disappointment in not finding him, by giving you good cheer—will you not take wine?"

"Let us drink from the same cup," said the gentleman, with a soft and passionate look, notwithstanding her warning; "the wine will only taste sweet to me, if your lips sip it too."

The lady's eye flashed suddenly, and her brow grew dark; but she answered, tossing her proud head, "I drink after no one, my lord. As to drinking after me, you may do as you please. Give me some wine."

"Oh, your cup will render the wine nectar to me," said the guest, while the attendant to whom she had spoken poured out some wine for her into one of the golden goblets. She took a small portion, and then told the man to give it to her visitor, saying, with a laugh not quite natural, "What foolish things men are!"

The supper proceeded; dish after dish was brought in, but the gentleman would taste nothing of what the lady had not partaken before, till his conduct became somewhat remarkable. Her brow grew dark as night for an instant, but cleared again; and all that remained was a bright red spot upon her cheek.

There was a slight rustling sound near the open window, as the supper drew towards its conclusion, and the lady remarked, "The wind methinks is rising." Twice or thrice she looked in the direction of the window, and a sort of anxious uncertain expression came into her face. She pressed her guest to drink more wine, and he did so, always using the same cup and keeping it by him; but the wine at last seemed to have its effect. His face flushed, his eyes sparkled, his language became warm and passionate, somewhat coarse withal, and mingled with a bitterness especially on the subject of woman's heart and mind, which was little less than insulting in a lady's presence.

Her eye fixed upon him firmly, shining clear and bright like a diamond, from under the slightly contracted brow; the red spot vanished

from her cheek, and she remained deadly pale. "Why gaze you at me so sternly, lovely Kate?" asked her guest.

"Because I think you do not yet know women rightly," answered the lady at once: "you will learn better one day. You need wait no longer," she continued, turning to the attendants; "we will be our own servants. Now, my good lord, to end your supper, taste one of these tarts of Flemish cream. I marked well when last you were here that you loved them, and I had them prepared expressly for you."

One of the servants, ere he went, carried the silver dish to his lady's guest; but the gentleman kept his rule. "Will you divide one with me, bright Kate!" he asked.

"Nay," she answered, glancing her eyes for an instant to the window, "I am not fond of them."

"Then I will not take them either," said her visitor. "What you love I will love—what you take I will take."

The lady set her teeth hard; then, as the servant set down the dish and withdrew, she suddenly stretched out her hand to another plate, saying in a low but firm voice, and with a bland smile, "Well I will divide one of these lady-graces, as they call them, with you."

"That is kind, lovely Kate," cried the visitor, drawing his chair nearer to her; "and of all lady's grace on earth, let me have yours."

The lady smiled again quite sweetly, parted the sort of cheesecake equally, and gave him half. He paused an instant, and she began. Then he ate, saying, "This is excellent."

"It is not bad," she answered, continuing to eat the cake, and keeping her eyes fixed upon him.

"Now that I have my lady's grace," he continued, drawing nearer still, and endeavouring to put his arm round her. But, instantly, she started up with a look of scorn; and, at the same moment, William Ifford sprang in at the open window.

"What is this, my lord!" he cried, "insulting my sweet cousin! Upstart and villain as you are, were there a drop of really noble blood in your veins—"

"It is vain, William! it is vain!" said the lady, in a low tone. "You have come too late. I have eaten too. My right noble lord, you look very pale. I told you that you knew not women rightly. You know them now—as much as e'er you will know. Heaven! how faint I feel! But his eyes roll in his head. Stop him from the door, William. You are sick, my lord! Will you try some Flemish cream, or taste more of my lady's grace? Methinks you have had enough for once."

"I was warned! I was warned!" murmured the unhappy man, holding by the table for support.

"Ay; but not warned that the hate of a heart like mine will sacrifice life itself for vengeance," answered the lady, looking down into a seat.

"I will have vengeance, too," said the guest, starting up, and staggering with a furious effort towards the door. But William Ifford caught him by the breast, and threw him back. He staggered—fell—rolled for a moment or two in frightful convulsions, and then, with a scream

like that of a sea-bird in a storm, gave up the ghost.

William Ifford was at this moment by the lady's side. "Catherine! Catherine!" he cried, "have you taken much?"

She made no answer; some quick sharp shudders passed over her frame, and a sort of choking sobbing convulsed her throat. A minute after, her head fell back upon the chair, and then, with a low but sharp sound, sunk down to the ground.

Her guilty kinsman gazed from the one corpse to the other with a wild and hesitating look. But then he thought he heard a noise. It was the sound of steps and voices coming near; and, leaping through the window, he disappeared. He could not have been gone fifty yards when the door of the room was burst open in haste, and the attendants of the house flocked in, with the page Frill and the old servant Tony in the midst.

"Poisoned, boy! poisoned!" cried the man named Lloyd. "Heaven and earth! it is too true!"

All paused in an instant, as the sight which that terrible chamber presented lay before their eyes; and for some moments not a word was said, while one gazed over the shoulders of another at the two corpses. Then all burst forth at once, surrounding the Earl of Hillingdon's page, and questioning him closely with eager and vociferous tongues; but Frill was more guarded in his answers than might have been expected. He told them that, liking all fine sights, he had amused himself by watching the Lady Catherine and her guest at supper, through the window on the right, between which and the other window stood a thick tree. He then detailed minutely all that had occurred till the entrance of Sir William Ifford; declared that he had heard steps approaching over the grassy lawn, and there had seen some one suddenly appear in the room, who, he supposed, had entered by the other window. He stoutly denied having seen the intruder's face; but at the same time remarked that the poisoning could not be his doing, for that nothing more was eaten, till, in the midst of high words, which first gave him a clew to the terrible truth, the one had fallen, and then the other, and he had run away to bring assistance.

Had the poison been of such a quality that any antidote would have proved effectual, so much time was lost that none could be administered. Not a spark of vitality remained when the bodies were at length examined; and the only indication of how the fatal event had occurred which could be discovered, was a small vial in the lady's bosom, containing a very minute portion of a white powder, which, being tried on a dog, produced almost instant death.

The wonder lasted its nine days and was then forgotten by the world at large; but the sudden disappearance of Sir William Ifford, the gay, the witty, the disolute, continued for some time longer to excite inquiry and remark. No one ever learned the conclusion of his history; some said he had entered a monastery of Barefooted Friars, and died there in the odour of sanctity; others, with greater probability on their side, declared that he had turned Turk, and was to the day of his death one of the most

relentless persecutors of the Christians. We only know that, on the night when this double death took place, a horseman rode away at a terrible pace from the small village in the neighbourhood, took his way as fast as possible towards the sea-side, and there left all traces of his course behind.

For three days the page and the old servant of the Earl of Hillingdon were detained in Huntingdonshire, to give evidence regarding the sudden death of two persons of such high rank; but coroners were as wise, and coroners' juries as enlightened, in those days as in our own, and a burlesque verdict was returned in a very tragic case. The stout old servant and his youthful companion then set out to join their lord, arrived in Germany in safety, and, thanks to many of those circumstances which might have seemed best calculated to impede them, such as their ignorance—or rather small knowledge—of the language, and their very narrow information upon geographical subjects, arrived within a few miles' distance of Heidelberg with fewer difficulties than better instructed persons would probably have encountered. The answers which they gave, in what they called German, to the questions of those who interrogated them completely puzzled their examiners; and the round they took to arrive at the city brought them to a point the most opposite from that at which a messenger from England might have been expected to appear. It was late at night when they arrived at the small village of Liegelhausen; but there they heard from the villagers a confirmation of the rumours which had previously reached them, that Heidelberg was completely invested, and, to use the expression of the boors, "that a field mouse could not creep in."

"I will try, at all events," said Frill, "for I know my lord would give his right hand for the news we bring. If it cost me my ears I will try;" and with this magnanimous resolution he lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was in the early gray of the morning: all was silent and solemn; the beleagured city lay in its brief repose; the cannon on the hills and at the gates were still; the camp of the assailants slumbered, except where the tired sentinel paced up and down, longing for relief, or where the wounded lay on the feverish beds of the crowded hospitals. Quietly and silently on foot, with their horses left behind at the village, and in the dress of the Palatinate peasantry, the servant and the page plodded on as if going from Liegelhausen to Neunheim. Ere they had gone far, they saw the tents which now thickly covered the slopes towards the Heiligberg, the huts of the Croats, and the breastworks which had been thrown up; while six pieces of artillery were seen stretched out upon a battery some three hundred yards up the hill. Still they walked on, however, plodding along, and affecting the heavy step and swinging air of the boor.

They were within a hundred paces of the bridge, when suddenly, from the neighbouring field, they heard the call to stand, and the next

instant several Austrian soldiers, in their white uniforms, sprang down into the road. One seized Tony by the arm, and the others were running up, when the page gave a look to the Neckar and sprang down the bank. The water, fortunately, was low, and the boy's heart stout. "In Frill! in!" cried Tony; and, without more ado, the youth dashed into the stream.

Two shots were instantly fired at him, but in haste and ill-aimed. He was seen, too, from the bridge, and several arquebuses were discharged amongst the Austrians with very little reverence for poor Tony, who had nearly suffered severely, held as he was in the midst of the enemy. Protected by the fire from the bridge, the boy hurried on for some way, up to his middle in water, then climbing on some rocks, and at length plunging boldly in where the tide was deep and strong. He was a good swimmer, but the force of the stream was great, and the water deadly cold. He was borne down, notwithstanding every effort, carried through one of the arches of the bridge, and though he struck for the shore as long as he could, yet nothing but the town wall presented itself dipping in the river, and his strength began to fail. A little sally-port and landing-place at length came in sight; but the poor lad's heart sunk, for it was distant, and he felt no power within him to reach it. The last thing he saw was a man running quickly along on the top of the wall; then all became dim and green, with a rushing sound in the ears, bewildered thoughts, and, at length, dull forgetfulness.

When the page opened his eyes again, he was in a small room and laid undressed upon a bed, with an old man of a mild and venerable aspect gazing at him. His whole frame tingled; his breathing was heavy and difficult: it seemed as if there was a world upon his chest; and, for several minutes, he recollected naught of what had happened. There were sounds in the air, however, which soon recalled him to a sense of where he was. Every minute or two a loud explosion shook the house and made the casements clatter as if the whole building were coming down; and, raising himself upon his arm, he tried to speak; but the old man gave him a sign to be silent, and, going to a table near, brought him a small quantity of wine.

It was long ere the stranger would permit him to converse, and longer ere he would allow him to rise, although the page explained that he had come to bring some intelligence of importance to his lord the Earl of Hillingdon.

"Your lord is quite safe and well," replied old Dr. Alting, to whose house the youth had been taken, in answer to his anxious inquiries, "and you can go to him by-and-by. At present you are not fit. There will be no assault to-day, for there was one yesterday; so you will have time enough."

But Frill was impatient, and about three o'clock he was permitted to go forth with directions as to where he was likely to find his master. The poor boy, however, had somewhat miscalculated his strength; for he found to climb the hill a weary task; and when he had obtained admission into the castle, he was sent from place to place in search of

Algernon, till at length he sat down at the foot of the second casement, and cried from very weariness.

While there, a young officer passed with his hand bound up, and paused to enquire what ailed him. The matter was soon explained, and the lad was once more directed onward, but with better assurance.

"The Earl is at the block-house which you see just peeping up yonder," said the officer; "I left him there five minutes ago; but go by those lower paths, for the fire is somewhat hot, and you may chance to get hurt as I have done, or worse."

The boy rose again and walked on, passed through the park of the Friesenberg, and approached the edge of the Carmelite wood. The cannonade, as he went, became every moment more and more fierce, and the balls whistled more than once over his head, while the roar of the artillery was mingled at intervals with the rattling fire of small arms. Not only in front and to the right was heard the sullen sound of the heavy ordnance; but rolling round and round, the deep voice of the cannon from the walls, and then farther off again from the Imperial batteries was heard like thunder in a forest, and still the mountains and rocks surrounding the narrow valley of Neckar echoed and re-echoed the terrific noise. He was a brave lad, but his nerves were shaken, and he looked round from time to time to right and to left expecting to see the enemy forcing their way in.

At length, however, he reached the foot of the little hill on which the block-house stood, and, looking up, saw two or three men whose faces he knew well, standing above, before a small palisade. "Is my lord here, Halford?" he cried. "Is my lord here?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the man. "Come up, Frill;" and the boy with a lightened heart ran up the steps of the mount. Before he reached the top, Algernon Grey came forth himself, saying to the man to whom Frill had spoken, "Go round to Colonel Herbert, Halford, as fast as possible. Say there is no demonstration even here—that I have too many men, and we are doing nothing. Ah, Frill, is that you! Welcome back, my good boy. How in Heaven's name got you in! Where is Tony?"

"In the hands of the enemy," replied the boy. "I swam the Neckar, and was nearly drowned, but he was caught."

"What news from England?" asked Algernon Grey eagerly. "Did the Lady Catherine give you or Tony a letter for me?"

"None, my noble lord," answered the page. "She intended, I believe, but was prevented."

"That is most unfortunate!" cried his lord bitterly. "All is going wrong here, and one word might have been of vast importance—"

"I have something to tell, sir," said Frill, in a low tone, "if you would move down a little, for it is not fitted for all ears."

Algernon took a few steps down the hill, saying, "Speak, speak!" and the boy went on, in a voice raised little above a whisper, to detail all that had occurred since he had left his lord. When he came to the catastrophe, Algernon Grey turned deadly pale, shocked and horrified beyond expression. For several min-

utes he did not utter a word, but gazed upon the ground in sad and bitter silence. He was free—the heavy bond which had weighed upon him for so many years was broken—his liberty was restored; but how dark and terrible were the means! and with these his mind busied itself in gloomy thoughts ere it would rest on aught else.

"Who was the man?" he asked at length,—"the person you say came in by the window!" "I did not see his face, my lord," replied the boy; "but I heard the voice of Sir William Iford!"

"My lord, my lord!" cried the soldier Halford, coming back as fast as he could run, "Colonel Herbert desires you to advance to the pheasant-garden, without a moment's delay, leaving nothing but a guard here."

Algernon Grey hurried up, called out the English and Dutch troops from the block-house and a small detached trench in front, arrayed them on the slope, and, telling the page to remain with the guard he left behind, ordered the men to advance at the charging pace by the winding path through the wood. The roll of musketry was now heard sharp and near, mingled with drums beating the charge; and, falling back to the side of the man Halford, the young Earl demanded what he had seen and heard.

"There were full two thousand men, sir, advancing to storm the works in the pheasant-garden," he replied. "I counted ten Austrian ensigns myself; and there were a number of Bavarian troops behind."

"Were they near?" asked Algernon Grey.

"Half way near the Crane's-nest and the Cavalier," replied the soldier.

The young Earl ran on again to place himself at the head, murmuring, "No time is to be lost, indeed."

The way was heavy and circuitous, interrupted by frequent flights of steps, which greedily delayed the men; but there was no cutting across; for the trees and the rocks of the Friesenberg in that part which had not yet been levelled, interrupted the straight course which might otherwise have been taken; and the firing was heard nearer and nearer, till even the sound of the guns did not drown the cries and shouts with which it was mingled; whilst still the beating drum and the blast of the trumpet was heard urging the men on either side to deadly strife. The young Earl's heart beat vehemently to get forward, but a full quarter of an hour elapsed ere he came in sight of the point of attack, approaching the works assailed by the angle of a fortified terrace which led to the Cavalier. This terrace was, perhaps, the weakest point of the whole defences of the castle; and, though commanded by the guns of the Cavalier above, it formed a sort of step, as it were, to the attack of the stronger work. The parapets, too, had been terribly shattered by the enemy's fire, and, when the young Englishman first caught sight of it, a terrible and an alarming scene presented itself to his eyes. An Austrian flag was already upon the terrace; the fight was going on hand to hand in several places; and, at the farther angle, driven almost under the guns of the Cavalier, he caught sight of Colonel Herbert, with a

Bohemian flag in his hand, rallying his men to charge the enemy in the hope of clearing the platform.

No consideration was necessary; the only course to be pursued was plain and straightforward; and though at the risk of encountering the fire of friends as well as of enemies, Algernon Grey sprang up the steps to the top of the terrace, arrayed his men with a wide front, and gave the order to charge. There was no hesitation either on the part of the English or the Dutch. All saw that, without a great effort, the fort was lost; and, rushing on in a compact body, they swept the whole length of the terrace, driving the assailants before them at the point of the pike. Attacked in front and rear at the same time, the Imperial troops, who were establishing themselves on the platform, gave way; many threw down their arms; and many either leaped over the parapet into the midst of their comrades below, or rushed to the tops of the ladders, and cast themselves upon those who were climbing up to support them. The outwork was regained; and, waving his hand to Herbert, whom he saw a little in advance, the young Earl was turning his head to give orders for a part of his men to fall back and line the parapet again, when suddenly he saw Agnes's father stagger, drop the flag, and fall forward on the platform. With a few brief words as to the defence of the work, Algernon Grey sprang forward to Herbert's side. Two of his men had already raised him in their arms; but his head hung heavily on his shoulder; and a ghastly wound on the right temple, passing along the whole side of the head and evidently injuring the skull, "hade hope itself despair."

"He is dead, sir, he is dead," said one of the men who held him in his arms.

"I think not," said Algernon, watching his countenance sadly; "the brain will not be injured. Throw a cloak over him and carry him down into the garden; I will come in a minute, when I have spoken with the captain of the cavalier—get him some water."

The men took him up and bore him down the steps; but the news had spread already amongst the men, and it was evident that they were greatly discouraged. Although rapid means were taken by Algernon Grey and the officer now in command of the outwork for its defence it is probable that it would have been taken that night, as it was on the following morning, had not the Imperial officers, smarting from severe loss and discouraged by an unexpected repulse at the very moment when they thought themselves victorious, ordered the drums to beat a retreat. A furious cannonade followed the enemy as they retired; and, seeing that all was safe for the time in that quarter, Algernon Grey left his men under the command of the Dutch officer associated with him, and turned to ascertain the fate of his friend. At the top of the steps, however, his eye ran over the town of Heidelberg, and he beheld with consternation fire and smoke arising in large volumes from three different parts of the town. Springing down, he hurried to a spot where, under some trees, he saw several men grouped together around another lying on the ground, and, as he advanced, one of them, a young

German officer, came forward to meet him, saying, "He is living, my lord; he has spoken, he has mentioned your name."

In another instant Algernon was by Herbert's side, and saw, with a gleam of hope, that his eyes were open, and the light of life and intellect still therein. They turned upon him, indeed, with a faint sad look, and the lips moved for a moment ere a sound issued forth. "My child!" he said, at length, "my child!"

"Shall I send for her?" asked Algernon Grey, kneeling by his side, and bending down his ear.

"No, no!" answered the wounded man, quickly; "but her fate, young man—her fate!"

"Fear not, fear not," answered the Earl; "I will defend, protect her with my life—die for her should need be."

"I believe you," said Herbert; "I will trust you, through God. Yet swear to me that you will deal with her honestly; swear by all that you hold most sacred—by your faith in Christ—by your honour as an English gentleman, that you will be to her as a brother."

"I will be more," answered Algernon, in a low, but firm voice, "I will be her husband. I swear to you, by all I hold most sacred, that, as soon as she herself will consent, she shall be my wife; till then, my sister."

"Your wife!" said Herbert, sternly; "have you not another wife, young lord!"

"No," answered Algernon Grey, pressing his hand; "that impediment is removed—that bond broken. If you had read the letter which I wrote you, you would have seen that the marriage was but in name. 'It is now, however, altogether at an end. I have received the tidings this day—within this hour. She whom men called my wife is dead.'"

"Dead?" cried Herbert, in a stronger voice; "death is busy just now;" and then he paused, and raised his hand feebly to his head; but the fingers rested upon the bloody hair, and he drew them back, and pressed Algernon's hand in his. "I trust you," he said at length, "I trust you, Algernon. Obertraut's news that you were already married, frightened—shocked me. I found confirmation in your letter, and I have been very sad ever since; but I trust you. Love her—oh, love her, and make her happy, for she deserves it well. An hour more, and the father's arm will be cold and powerless. Be you all to her. What wants that man? Ask him whence he comes. I would fain die in quiet."

"The town has fallen, sir," said an officer, who had come up in haste. "In two places they have forced a way, and Colonel Merren has retreated to the castle with the garrison. He sent me up to call Colonel Herbert to instant council."

"Tell him," said Herbert, raising his head, "that Colonel Herbert is removed from his command by a higher power than any on earth. Tell him what you have seen, and that I say, God protect him, and bless his arms in a just cause! Now, Algernon, one word more—there are not many left for me to speak: the town is taken—the castle must fall; we have no stores, no means. Good God! let not my child be in this place, if it must fall by storm! Heaven and earth!—it makes this poor chat-

tered brain reel. Swear,—swear you will take her hence. There are the passages below; she knows them all. There is the way, out there;”—and he pointed with his hand.

“I will, if it be possible,” answered Algernon Grey.

“Possible, possible!” said Herbert, his mind evidently wandering; “oh, yes, it is quite possible. You hear, he swears that he will take her hence,” continued the dying man, with his faint eyes rolling over the bystanders; “he swears—remember—keep him to his oath.”

“What, my gallant friend!” said an English voice behind Algernon Grey, “brought to this at last!”

“Ay, Merven, ay, even so,” answered Herbert; “we must all come to this. Bring me some water. I will speak with you, Merven. He swears he will take her hence before they storm the place. Send him forth, for I know him—know him well. He will remain to fight; and then she is without father, husband, friend. Oh, God! have mercy on me! how my brain reels!”

“Let some one fetch a litter,” said Merven, kneeling down by his side; “we must bear him home.”

“I have sent for one already,” said Algernon Grey; “yonder it comes, I think.”

“My child, my sweet child!” said Herbert, gazing still in Merven’s face; “she can close my eyes, and then away—you will not let him linger!”

“No,” answered the Governor, “I will send him forth, upon my word. If my command is of any power he shall go. He can be of little service here, I fear.”

“Thanks, thanks!” said Herbert, and fell into silence, closing his eyes.

A few minutes after, a litter was brought up from the castle; it was one which the Princess Elizabeth had often used,—and Herbert was placed upon it, and the curtains drawn. Four stout soldiers, taking it upon their shoulders, carried it down, and Algernon Grey followed, conversing sadly with Merven, and informing him of all that had taken place of the assault on their side.

“You have been more fortunate than we have,” answered the Governor. “Trutzkaiser was taken early in the day; and the fools, forgetting to shut the gates as our soldiers rushed in, the enemy came pell mell amongst them. I rallied them, barrioaded the street by the Spere’s door, and kept them at bay till four, when came the news that the bridge was likewise forced; and it became needful at once to retire into the castle, lest I should be taken in front and roar at once. But even here I find,” he added in a low voice, “there is but provision and ammunition for four days. Tilly has already sent to offer terms; but I have referred him to Vere, in Mannheim; and most likely we shall have another assault to-morrow. Hark! Do you hear those shrieks? ’Tis from the town. The bloody villains are at their work!” and he looked sternly down upon the ground, setting his teeth hard. Algernon Grey made no reply; and Merven continued, “You have promised to go, my friend, and take the sweet girl with you; but how is it to be done?”

“I know not,” answered the young Earl;

“but my promise was only conditional. If we could send her forth in safety all would be well: I cannot—ought not to quit the place while you remain to defend it.”

“He knew you, you see,” said Merven; “but if there be a means I must send you; for I have promised unconditionally; and you must obey me, my young lord—how, is the only question.”

“Herbert seemed to think she knew of some means,” said Algernon Grey; “but yet—”

“No buts, my lord,” replied Merven. “If there be a means you must take it, when and how you can. I desire, I command you to do so; it will be two mouths less in the castle, and that is always something. Stay, I will ask him what he meant. Perhaps we could dress her as a page, and send you under a flag of truce to confer with Vere on the terms of capitulation; but no, it would not do. Tilly is such a brute; you would almost be as safe within the walls; and his men are not the most famous for keeping terms even when solemnly sworn to. I should not wonder if we were all massacred marching out. But I will ask him if he knows any other means;” and, taking a step or two forward to the side of the litter, he drew back the curtain. The moment after, he turned his face sadly towards Algernon Grey, shaking his head sadly, and saying, “He can give no answer now.”

Herbert’s eyes were open, but they were fixed and meaningless. The jaw had dropped; the hand grasped tight the side of the litter, but it was already cold as ice.

“Halt, my men,” said Merven; “’tis useless bearing him farther. Carry him to the garden-er’s house, there;” and he pointed up to a small stone building lying between the outer and the inner works, some fifty paces on the left. Then grasping the Earl’s hand, he added, “Hasten down to her and break the tidings; then ask her if she knows any means of flying from this place; and, if she does, remember it is my most express command that you guard her safely on the way. They tell me some one got into the town to-day from without; and if so, there must be a way hence also.”

“It was my poor page, who swam the Neckar,” answered Algernon, with a sad smile; “but I will go and bear my heavy story to poor Agnes.”

“Do, do,” said Merven; “and I will hasten back into the castle and send a messenger to Tilly, calling on him as a man and a Christian to stop the atrocities going on there below. Those shrieks wring my very heart.”

The unfeeling reply to Merven’s message is well known; and every reader of history is aware that for three whole days the town of Heidelberg was given up to a brutal soldiery.

Algernon Grey walked sadly on, and slowly too; for he shrunk from the terrible task before him. He did wrong, though unintentionally, for he calculated not how fast rumour travels, know not that the utmost speed was needful to outstrip the winged messengers of evil tidings. He paused for a moment at the foot of the stairs leading to Agnes’s apartments, which were still in what is called the Electress’s lodging; then, having made up his mind how to act, and laid vain plans for breaking the tidings

gently, he ascended with a quick step, and opened the door.

Agnes was seated at a table, with her hands pressed over her eyes and her bosom heaving with heavy sobs; but the moment he entered she raised her head, started up and cast herself upon his bosom, murmuring, "Oh, Algernon, Algernon!"

He saw that all had been told, and for his sole reply he pressed her to his heart in silence.

"Where have they taken him?" she asked, at length, wiping away the tears that flowed fast again as soon as dried.

"To the gardener's house," he answered, "to the right of the great casemate."

"I must go thither," she said, "I must go thither. Come with me, dear Algernon; I have none but you to support me now." And she moved towards the door, dressed as she was at the moment.

"Nay, throw this veil over you, my love," he said, taking up one that lay near and putting it over her head. Then, drawing her arm through his own, he led her down, and, choosing the least frequented paths, proceeded towards the gardener's house.

The sun was setting in the mellow evening of an early autumn day; the sky was clear and bright; the aspect of all nature sparkling and beautiful; peace and tranquillity breathed forth from the fair face of all inanimate things: while the tiger in man's heart was defiling with blood the noblest work of the Creator. The contrast rendered that whole day more dark, more sad, more terrible than if heavy thunder-clouds had brooded over the devoted city, or storm and tempest had swept the valley, overrunning with inassacre and crime.

They met several of the soldiery, as they walked on; but, with an instinctive reverence for sorrow, the men made large way for them to pass; and Agnes, with trembling steps and weeping eyes, approached the house where her father's body lay, and entered the room of death. For an instant she clung almost convulsively to her lover's bosom, when the fearful sight of the inanimate clay, streaked with the dark blood of the death-wound, appeared before her; but then, loosening her hold, with a wild gasp she crept towards the bed, as if afraid to wake him; and, kneeling down, kissed the cold hand and cheek. She knelt there long, till the daylight faded, and Algernon gently laid his hand upon her arm, saying, "Rouse yourself, dearest Agnes! We have his last commands to obey. He has given you to me for ever; but has charged me to convey you hence, if it be possible, before a new assault has been made upon the place, hinting that you could point out the means of flight. Come, then, into another room, and let us speak of these things."

Agnes rose more calm than he had expected, and, laying her hand on his, she answered, "Whatever you ask me, I will do, Algernon; but you must let me watch here this night; I will come now, but it will be to return again soon; and I will try to clear my thoughts, and tell you what were the wishes and intentions of him who lies there so sadly still."

She turned her head from the bed, and, with her eyes cast down, withdrew into the outer room of the gardener's dwelling, where there

was no one but an old servant; for the chief gardener himself had removed some weeks before to a more secure abode; and there seating herself near the window, she seemed to watch with eyes half overflowing the last faint streaks of light that hung upon the western sky.

"He felt that it would end thus, Algernon," she said at length, "and often talked to me of such evil chances, as if he would prepare my mind for the event. But it went worse with him lately; for something, I know not what, had disturbed and grieved him. He spoke then of sending me to the Electress mother, and seemed doubtful and anxious; whereas before he had always seemed to feel that if it were God's will he should fall, you would protect and defend me."

"It was, my love, that he heard suddenly, and from one who knew not all the facts," Algernon replied, "that which he would not listen to from me."

"I fear it embittered his last hour," said Agnes gloomily; "for he left me this morning more sad and careworn than ever. I fear that doubts and apprehensions for his child troubled him in the hour of death."

"Not so, dear one," replied her lover; "by a happy chance, my page found means this morning to force his way into the town, having been sent by me to England; and thus I was enabled to assure him that every obstacle between me and you was removed forever. It is a sad and horrible tale, Agnes, not fitted for ears so pure as yours to hear; but of this, at all events, be assured, that on that score, at least, your father's heart was at rest, and that our union has his blessing."

"Oh, thank God!" said Agnes, with a deep-drawn breath, as if the bitterest part of her sorrow was withdrawn. "These are balmy tidings, indeed, Algernon. But I recollect not what I was saying. Yes; it was that he wished me to go to the Electress Louise; but ere his messenger could return, the passage from the other side was cut off; and then he would have sent me forth by the passages which lead out through the rocks towards the Wolf's Well, beyond the enemy's post. But I could not go alone, and there was no single one with whom he would trust my safety. If many went, we were sure to be discovered and stopped, and the peril seemed too great for the occasion."

"Such is not the case, now," answered Algernon, the meaning of Herbert's words breaking upon him. "You are in far more peril here than anywhere in the open country. There we should but be made prisoners. But the storming of a fortress is an awful thing, Agnes, and there are fates worse than death. However," he continued, as she bent down her head with a pale cheek, "it is well to be prepared for any event. Know you the way, dear one? Have you the keys?"

"This is all that is needful," answered Agnes, drawing a key from her bosom. "He has made me wear this ever since the siege began, and long ago he taught me all the ways, with a prophetic warning that I might one day need them."

"I remember your telling me so when first we met," answered her lover; and they went

on to speak of many things connected with their past, their present, and their future fate, with that desultory discursiveness in which the mind is fond to indulge in moments of deep grief. The old servant of the gardener came in upon them to light a lamp, and recalled them to the present; and the night-drum beating reminded Algernon Grey that his men were probably still in the outworks. He loved not to leave Agnes there alone; but she herself was the first to propose it. "I must go and take my place in that room," she said; "and there I will spend the night in prayer. You will leave me, dear Algernon, for you must be sadly weary. You were in arms all last night. I know."

"I will leave you for an hour, Agnes, for I must visit the posts," he answered; "but then I will return and keep watch beside you—here. If you would be alone, for there are no feelings between you and me that the living eyes of him whom we shall watch in death might not have seen and sanctioned."

"No," she said; "no; you shall stay here, if you will, when you return. I own that to have you near me will be a comfort and a support, but for the time I am there I would fain be alone. Yet come with me to the door; I am very weak and foolish, but it is the first sight of the cold and motionless clay of those we once loved so dearly that unnerves the heart."

Algernon Grey took the lamp and guided her to the door, paused when she hesitated for an instant, gazing forward, and then, when she advanced steadily, carrying the lamp which he had given her, he closed the door and left her, telling the old man to remain in the outer room till he returned.

With a quick step the young Englishman hurried up first to the block-house, and thence, by the same path he had pursued in the morning, to the terrace and the cavalier. Everywhere he found the soldiers dull, heavy, and dispirited. They seemed to mourn for Herbert as if he had been a father, and to look upon the defence of the castle as hopeless without him to lead and guide them. In a brief conversation, the officer commanding the cavalier mentioned the facts which he had himself observed, and besought him to return to the castle and tell the Governor the state of things at the outworks.

"It would be better," he said, "to relieve the men at once, and send troops that have not been accustomed to fight under the poor Colonel's command. If need be, we can serve elsewhere, but the men are much fatigued."

There was much reason in what he said, and Algernon, speeding back to the castle, made his report to the Governor in person. Mervyn saw at once the expediency of the arrangements proposed, and promised they should be made, adding, "Tilly has allowed me to send an officer to Horace Vere to state exactly our situation, and to ask his commands; but this fierce Bavarian would not grant a suspension of arms even till our messenger's return, thinking, I believe, to wear us out with watching and anxiety, without any intention of renewing the assault for some days."

Some officers came in at the moment with reports, and Algernon Grey withdrew to return to the gardener's house. All was quiet and still

within; and advancing to the door of the room, where he had left Agnes, he opened it partially, saying, "I have returned, dear girl." He saw that she was kneeling and in prayer; and, closing the door again, he dismissed the old man to bed, wrapped his cloak round him, and seated himself to think. For more than an hour he remained in meditation; but he was wearied with long watching and great exertion for the last few days. His eyes felt heavy; and, ere he had power to resist the influence, he slept. He was awoken by a quick, sharp, measured tramp; and, turning his ear, he listened. "Fresh men going down to relieve the people at the outworks," he said—"I cannot have slept long;" and, seating himself again in the chair from which he had risen, he began to meditate once more upon his situation. Three minutes had scarcely elapsed when the report of a cannon or arquebuse made him start up. Then came a rattling fire of small arms, and then a cannon-shot from the inner works of the castle. Springing to the door, he ran out, ascended an outer staircase which led to a high balcony above; there the view was clear over the young, lately planted trees of the garden towards the castle; and, though the night was somewhat dark, it was soon brightened by a long line of fire that ran along between him and the great casemate. At the same instant he heard shots and shouts from the side of the cavalier; and the terrible truth burst upon his mind, that he was there alone with her he loved best on earth, between two large parties of the enemy's troops. By some means the Imperialists had passed the outworks, and gained the very foot of the inner defences. All return to the castle was cut off; and it was vain to hope, that, though they might be repulsed from the walls of the castle itself, the enemy could ever be dislodged from the advantageous position they had gained. Thought was vain. There was no room for exertion. Courage and daring could do nothing; and all that remained was to save Agnes by flight, if flight were yet possible.

Hurrying down as speedily as possible, he re-entered the house and found her he loved in the outer room. "What is it?" she cried, with eyes full of terror.

"The enemy have gained the whole gardens," answered Algernon Grey; "they are between us and the castle on the one side, and in the Pheasant-garden on the other. Instant fight," dear Agnes, is our only chance—you must not hesitate, dear girl—life is but a small consideration in comparison with what may happen, if we stay—you must not hesitate."

"Not for an instant," she answered; "it was his command, it is your wish, and I am ready;—one last look, and I go."

She returned to the room where her father's body lay; and then, after pressing her lips upon his, came forth, and joined her lover. She wept not, she trembled not—she was calm and firm; and they issued forth together, gazing on into the darkness. "This way," said Agnes, in a low tone; "it is not far. Hark! how fiercely they are firing; they will not mind us. Let us pass through the labyrinth of clipped borkhams. Under the arches we shall escape all eyes."

Hurrying on through narrow rows of shrubs cut into the form of arcades, without missing

one path or turning, they came to the top of a large sight of steps, where the whole magnificent scene of a night attack upon a fortress was displayed to their eyes, by the continual flashing of the cannon from the bastions, and the long, sudden blaze of the small-arms discharged by the regiments of arquebusiers below. Ever and anon the vast masses of the castle started out from the darkness, illuminated by the broad glare, and then were covered with a black veil again; while the thunder of the artillery broke, with awful grandeur, the stillness of the night. The fugitives paused only for a moment, however; but Agnes whispered, "Let us make haste—day will soon break;" and the castle clock, almost at the same moment, struck the hour of four. Algernon Grey counted but three, for the cannon interrupted the sound again; but, hurrying down the steps, they walked along in the direction of the great terrace, till, in the front of the rock which had been hewn away nearly into a wall, they came to a niche, before which was placed the statue of a water-god in the midst of a marble basin.

"Here," said Agnes, "here is the place. Let me feel, where is the lock?" and she ran her hand over the face of the niche. For nearly a minute she could not find the key-hole, but at length succeeded; and the stone door at once gave way, opening the mouth of a narrow passage.

"Take the key and lock it," she said, passing in first. Algernon Grey followed, and closed the door.

"You are safe; I trust you are safe, my beloved!" he cried, throwing his arms around her. Agnes made no answer; but he could feel her sob violently upon his bosom, now that

the extreme peril which had roused all her energies had ceased. He soothed and consoled her to the best of his power; and then, to engage her mind with other things, inquired, "Whither does this lead, dear girl?"

"Up into the hills," she answered, "above the Wolf's-well. It was intended for an aqueduct, I believe, to bring the waters of the stream down to the castle; but it has never been so used. Let us on, Algernon, the bitter parting is over."

Gently and kindly he led her on, feeling the way before him with his sheathed sword, and supporting the gentle being by his side with his left arm passed round her. The way was steep, and in some places rugged; for full half an hour they went slowly on, hearing from time to time the tramp of men above them, and the constant roar of the artillery, showing the castle had not yet fallen. Sometimes the air was close; but very frequently a spot of dim light was seen on the left just above the level of their heads; and the cool air blew in from without. At length the grey dawn could be seen streaming in through the apertures made to ventilate the conduit; and in a quarter of an hour after, a door presented itself before them—was easily unlocked, and Agnes and her lover stood upon the side of the mountain out of sight of Heidelberg. The fresh grey morning rested soberly upon the hills. The cannonade had ceased. No sounds broke the stillness of the scene around. The green Neckar flowed glistening on below. All bore the aspect of peace and tranquillity; and, pressed in each other's arms, they thanked God for deliverance, allayed by some sorrow, but still merciful and sweet.



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